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Jeremiah J. Johnston

The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter

A Tradition-Historical Study of the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment

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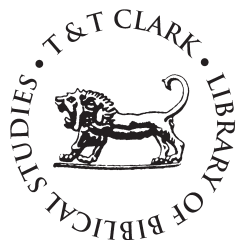

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A Tradition-Historical Study of the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment

Jeremiah J. Johnston

Foreword by Craig A. Evans

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For
Professor Craig A. Evans
John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins,
Houston Baptist University

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ABBREVIATIONS

Primary

1 Apol.	*First Apology*, Justin Martyr
1 En.	*1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)*
2 En.	*2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)*
3 En.	*3 Enoch (Hebrew Apocalypse)*
Acts Pet.	*Acts of Peter*
Apoc. Pet.	*Apocalypse of Peter*
Acts Pil.	*Acts of Pilate*
Ag. Ap.	Josephus, *Against Apion*
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
2 Bar.	*2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)*
3 Bar.	*3 Baruch (Greek Apocalypse)*
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the *Damascus Document*
Dial.	*Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Gen. Rab.	*Genesis Rabbah*
Gos. Phil.	*Gospel of Philip*
GPet	*Gospel of Peter*
Hist. Eccl.	Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*
Jub.	*Jubilees*
J.W.	Josephus, *Jewish Wars*
Life	Josephus, *The Life*
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishnah
3–5 Macc.	*3–5 Maccabees* (Old Testament Pseudepigrapha)
MT	Masoretic Text (of the Hebrew Bible)
P.Oxy.	Papyrus Oxyrhynchus
P. Cair.	Papyrus Cairo
P.G.	*Patrologia Graece*
Q	Qumran
1QHa	*Hodayot* or *Thanksgiving Hymns*
1QM	*Milhamah* or *War Scroll*
1QS	*Serek* or *Rule of the Community*
4Q285	*Serekh Hamilhamah* or *Rule of War*
4Q521	4QMessAP or *Messianic Apocalypse*
Sib. Or.	*Sibylline Oracles*
T. Benj.	*Testament of Benjamin*
Wis	*Wisdom of Solomon*

Secondary

AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
AB	Anchor Bible (Commentary)
ABD	D. N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols., New York, 1992)
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums

AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	W. Haase and E. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin, 1979–)
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
BAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1957)
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDAG	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1979)
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BIFAO	Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale
BTS	Bible et terre sainte
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
EDNT	H. R. Balz and G. Schneider (eds.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1990–93)
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSJSup	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*, Supplements
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSPSup	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LDAB	Leuven Database of Ancient Books
MTS	Marburg theologische Studien
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
NumSup	*Numen: International Review for the History of Religions*, Supplements
OTL	Old Testament Library
RILP	Roehampton Institute London Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
SWJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964–74)
TENT	Texts and Editions for New Testament Studies
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VigChr	*Vigiliae christianae*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

FOREWORD

In recent years New Testament scholars have increasingly become aware of the importance of the second century for their work. The hegemony of the first century seems finally to have ended. This is a welcome development for many reasons. The first reason is of course obvious: Some of the literature in the New Testament may not have reached its "canonical" form until some time in the second century. A second reason has to do with the recognition that decisions about what is authoritative and what is not were made in the second century. The gospel harmonies of Justin Martyr and Tatian in 160–170 CE seem to regard as authoritative only the four gospels that in time would formally be recognized as canonical. Likewise P.Egerton 2, a gospel-like fragment or perhaps a harmony, makes primary use of the Synoptic Gospels and John. And of course the spirited attacks on the "heretical" gospels mounted by Irenaeus in 180 CE presupposed these four and no others. We should hardly be surprised that when the codex was penned that we call $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ at the end of the second century or at the beginning of the third century, we find only Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This unified testimony did not come about by accident but by a process of debate, deliberations, and vetting—all during the second century.

But when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written the idea of a Christian canon was only in its infancy. It was the second century that clarified the picture. And this picture was clarified in important ways by the production and circulation of a number of writings that offered new versions and new interpretations of the old stories. The *Acts of Pilate*, the *Gospel of Peter*, and the *Gospel of Thomas* were only three of many writings that appeared in the second century, a century that in many ways was as important for the Christian movement as was the first. Just because certain writings were not included in the canon did not mean that they made no contribution. Even the "private teaching" of the Jesus of the Gnostic gospels and the truncated version of the gospel by Marcion contributed to early Christianity's understanding of what the Jesus story should look like.

Even the "orthodox" theologies that were penned in the third and fourth centuries were indebted to the decisions and insights of the second century. All of the literature of the second century, and by this I mean what was received from the first century as well as what was produced in the second century, was part of the matrix from which Christianity's normative story and theology of Jesus emerged. What constituted the authoritative and authentic story of Jesus was largely settled by the end of the second century.

It is for these reasons that I am so pleased to see the publication of Dr. Jeremiah Johnston's dissertation. His research makes a vital contribution to our understanding of the literature and dynamics of the second century. Dr. Johnston makes the case, which to date has not been made but only assumed, that the gospel fragment in the Akhmîm Codex discovered at the end of the nineteenth century is in all probability the *Gospel of Peter* that Bishop Serapion condemned at the end of the second century. But the *Gospel of Peter* is no ordinary "heretical" text. In fact, it is not heretical at all. It represents a creative piece of apologetic that engages the variegated criticisms hurled at the small Christian movement struggling to survive in the face of official Roman hostility, pagan intellectual ridicule, and rejection in the synagogue.

Moreover, the author of the *Gospel of Peter* has produced no ordinary apocryphal text. Rather, he has composed a remarkable piece of literature. In short, the author of the *Gospel of Peter* has transformed the biographies of the first-century gospels into a novel, thus reflecting the literary tendencies that were coming to expression in the Greco-Roman world of the late first and early second centuries. In this Dr. Johnston offers the scholarly community a truly new and significant insight, which, I might add, has already caught scholarly attention.[1]

Dr. Johnston also compellingly shows how the *Gospel of Peter* develops the apologetic of Matthew's version of the burial of Jesus and the discovery of the empty tomb in a way that counters the growing criticisms and objections emanating from the synagogue and especially from pagan critics like Celsus and, still later, Porphyry. Both of these critics complain that the essential Christian story—the resurrection—lacked credible witnesses. They even suggest who these credible witnesses should have been. The *Gospel of Peter* addresses this deficit with a reworked resurrection account in which a number of hostile witnesses, as well as the

1. See Thomas J. Kraus, "EvPet 12,50–14,60: Leeres Grab und was dann? Kanonische Traditionen, *novelistic development* und romanhafte Züge," *Early Christianity* 5 (2013): 335–61, here 338 and n. 10.

male disciples of Jesus, not only witness the resurrection of Jesus but see him emerge from the tomb accompanied by his cross in a manner that would have brought to every pagan mind epiphanies of their gods.

Everyone interested in the development of the gospels and the Jesus story in the second century will want to read Dr. Johnston's learned book.

Craig A. Evans
Houston Baptist University

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

In my *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the New Testament: A Guide to Publications* (1987) I drew attention to 104 gospels, epistles, acts, and apocalypses that should be included in a full edition of the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Some of them clearly antedate the latest composition in the canonical New Testament, and many, like the *Gospel of Peter*, claim to be an improved record of historical events related to Jesus from Nazareth.

The *Gospel of Peter*, which all scholars agree appeared as a work in the second century CE, is a stunning and rather unique document. It presents a cross that speaks, a novel feature that is investigated in J. D. Crossan's *The Cross that Spoke* (1988). Crossan claimed that the *Gospel of Peter* 5:15–6:21 is "independent of the New Testament gospels," a conclusion with which many scholars do not agree. In 2004, T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas focused on and drew attention to the Greek fragments in *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*.

Naturally, most critics will dismiss as mythological the depiction of a cross that walks and talks. But the narrative may draw attention to the historicity and early dimensions of the canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. None of these evangelists explains how Jesus was resurrected by God. Matthew adds that an angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone and mentions an earthquake (28:2). But, readers of the New Testament gospel will ask: "What actually happened and did anyone witness it?" Most importantly, we are told that a resurrected Jesus appeared to his chosen disciples and also to one who first hated him, namely, Saul.

What should our judgment be when the apocryphal works provide names for the anonymous characters in the canonical gospels? For example, is the naming of the one who guarded Jesus' tomb, Petronius, according to the *Gospel of Peter* 8:31 historical or legendary? Can it be considered authentic, as supplying the name "Malchus" for the one whose ear was severed by Peter according to the author or editor of the Gospel of John (18:10). Or, are all such "additions" legendary and reflective of

the need for more precise details as the naming of the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus, namely Dysmas and Gestas. Likewise, the apocryphal gospels report that Longinus is the name of the man who pierced Jesus' side. These details are supplied in, but are not original to, the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus and Acts of Pilate.* Early Christians read Jesus' narrative and were curious as to the names of those who were anonymous in the canonical gospels. Thus, these details supply glimpses into early Church history and not into Jesus' history. Careful study of these extracanonical materials raises a number of questions and at the same time suggests scenarios in which we may imagine early Christians wrestling with the meaning of the extraordinary event that brought the Christian Church into being.

I am pleased to publish Jeremiah J. Johnston's careful and erudite study of Jesus' resurrection according to the author of and traditions preserved in the *Gospel of Peter*. This stunning composition helps us comprehend the long historical process of debating and vetting what will be called "the New Testament." The collection evolved within a world of polemics. Eventually the four canonical gospels became dominant; and this is clear in P.Egerton 2, Papyrus 45, and Irenaeus. These works date to the late second century CE.

Scholars may now confront the claim that the author of the *Gospel of Peter* presents an apologetic version of Matthew. (I would add that 14:59–60 is dependent on John 21). They may also contemplate the identification of the Akhmîm Codex Greek fragment as "probably" an "excerpt" from the *Gospel of Peter* known to Bishop Serapion (ca. 200). Scholars need to recall that no excerpt from the *Gospel of Peter* is found in Patristics, so we cannot compare excerpts; moreover, P.Oxyrhynchus 2949 and 4009 do not seem to preserve the *Gospel of Peter*. Jeremiah Johnston demonstrates, conclusively, that "the Akhmîm gospel fragment finds its place in the ongoing cut and thrust of second-century polemic and apologetic centred on early Christianity's proclamation of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth." Dr. Johnston lays a solid foundation for future discussions of the origin and importance of the *Gospel of Peter*. Particularly salutary is the refinement of methodology for comparing texts of uncertain date and provenience. Scholars will be able to apply Dr. Johnston's methods to other important, but undated, literature.

I appreciate Professor Evans' insight that we must not jettison this apocryphal gospel as "heretical"; for example, the *Gospel of Peter* is not docetic. It is indeed a marvelously crafted apologetic masterpiece that reflects one of the heights of second-century creative literature. In some ways, it is an ancient novel like the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the *Acts of*

Andrew, the *Acts of John*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*, which is probably a Jewish composition that heralds Joseph as "the son of God."

The second century was not as important as the first, in which John the Baptizer, Jesus, James, Paul, and Peter lived, but it significantly defined the canon (with the challenge of Marcion, the emergence of Gnosticism, and the process of editing our traditions and even the gospels, notably the Gospel of John that eventually included 7:53–8:11). "Orthodoxy" and "heresy" are anachronisms in the early decades of Christianity, but they clearly are adumbrated in the Johannine Epistles. Hence, the so-called Apocryphal New Testament highlights the importance and the character of our New Testament gospels. Dr. Johnston's learned work makes a significant contribution to a field of study that a growing number of scholars now view as mainstream New Testament research.

James H. Charlesworth
Princeton
Easter 2015

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present monograph represents a complete revision of my doctoral dissertation written and defended under the supervision of Professor Craig A. Evans (Acadia University) and Professor Paul Foster (University of Edinburgh) in concert with extremely helpful recommendations offered from my external examiner, Professor William Telford (Durham University). This work stands firmly on their shoulders.

The German sage Franz Kafka was fond of saying, "The meaning of life is that it ends," and for most all too soon. Beliefs concerning death and the afterlife have been pondered for centuries by those who claim faith and those who do not. For Jews and Christians, resurrection-centric beliefs emerged out of the shadows of Sheol. By the second century, resurrection faith was under severe attack and became the focus of the new movement's apologetic. The present study focuses on the history of the understanding of Jesus' resurrection, particularly as it came to expression in the second century, especially in reference to a work known as the *Gospel of Peter*. Such critical study is necessary, for the resurrection account in this gospel text has been neglected. Even in Paul Foster's magisterial study, the resurrection is not discussed to any significant degree. The identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *Gospel of Peter*, referenced at the end of the second century by Antioch's Bishop Serapion, has not been adequately defended. Also, beyond the assumption that the fragment belongs to the *Gospel of Peter*, scholars have offered very little support for a second-century date of the text. My work shows that the Akhmîm fragment does represent a second-century text, which in turn lends important support to the traditional identification with the *Gospel of Peter*. This study not only offers a much firmer foundation on which future study of the *Gospel of Peter* may build, it also refines a method of comparative study by which other texts of uncertain date and provenance may be assessed.

I wish to express my gratitude to Craig Evans for inspiring me with the idea to pursue this study, and after all, I moved into his home library for six weeks to complete the original thesis. I am quite sure Mrs. Evans

is pleased the work has come to completion! Professor Evans is the consummate scholar and I have learned so much from him that words could never convey my love and appreciation for who he is. I would also like to thank Professor Paul Foster for his exemplar leadership in mentoring me in the completion of my thesis. I will always cherish the memories of our time together at New College. I thank Dr. Dirk Obbink and Dr. Daniela Colomo for being available to me and from whom I learned much in the Griffith Papyrology Lab Sackler Library of the Bodleian. I would like to thank the faculties and students of Oxford Centre for Mission Study (the best-kept secret in Oxford) and Middlesex University for their collegiality and training during the stages of my Ph.D. studies.

Finally, I wish to record my deepest appreciation to my wife, Audrey, daughter, Lily Faith, son, Justin, and my parents, Jerry and Cristie Jo, who encouraged me from the beginning to persevere.

Jeremiah J. Johnston
Houston Baptist University
Pentecost 2015

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Fofrty years ago George Nickelsburg published his impressive Harvard University doctoral dissertation on resurrection, immortality, and eternal life in intertestamental Judaism.[1] Among other things, Nickelsburg showed how beliefs about afterlife inevitably reflected the vicissitudes of life in the intertestamental period.[2] Ideas about rewards and punishment (in this life or in a heavenly life), justice, restoration, and the forms of human existence in the post-mortem state came to expression. Nickelsburg took up this study for the simple reason that "No one…has offered a detailed, exegetical study of the relevant intertestamental texts."[3] His goal was to "fill the gap" and his solid study did just that.[4]

1. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972). Although I cite the first edition in this chapter, one could also consult the second edition, which was published under a slightly different title: *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (HTS 56; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

2. Among the many trials experienced by intertestamental Israel was conflict with Samaria, conquest by Alexander the Great, five major wars fought by Seleucid and Ptolemaic rivals (with Israel caught in the middle), the violent oppression of Antiochus IV that led to the Maccabean revolt, violence and instability during the Hasmonean dynasty, and finally Roman conquest and occupation. Besides these military and political events, there was the unending pressure to compromise with Hellenism and, later, the Roman cult of the divine emperor. Intertestamental literature must be read in the light of this turbulent history. We shall observe an interesting parallel with early Christian literature and the challenges early Christians faced.

3. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality*, 9–10.

4. Nickelsburg speaks this way because most Christian study of afterlife ideas has focussed on the Old Testament and New Testament. Jewish scholars, of course, focussed on the Old Testament (or Tanak) and early Rabbinic literature. One of the rare assessments of intertestamental literature was R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity; or, Hebrew, Jewish, and Christian Eschatology from pre-Prophetic Times till the Close of the New*

In the years since the publication of Nickelsburg's dissertation a great many texts have been published, including the remainder of the Dead Sea Scrolls. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the topic of afterlife beliefs in the Judeo-Christian tradition was in urgent need of further work. In English language scholarship two books answered this call. Alan Segal's comprehensive *Life after Death* appeared in 2004.[5] Segal begins his study by asking a number of intriguing questions, such as

> [W]hy did the Egyptians insist on an afterlife in heaven while the body was embalmed in a pyramid on earth? Why did the Babylonians view the dead as living underground in a prison? Why did the Hebrews refuse to talk about the afterlife in First Temple times (1000–586 BCE) and then begin to do so in Second Temple times (539 BCE–70 CE)? Why did the Persians envision the afterlife as bodily resurrection while many Greeks narrated the flight of a soul back to heaven?[6]

The last question, of course, anticipates the philosophical and religious context the early Christian movement would confront. Segal's scholarly erudition is not confined to texts and ideas of the past, but with remarkable insight it speaks, almost pastorally, to contemporary human questions and longing.

Segal's study, like Nickelsburg's, rightly investigates the historical and cultural circumstances that in various ways gave shape to religious beliefs, especially as they relate to beliefs concerning post-mortem existence. As he examines the changes and developments of afterlife beliefs in the various traditions of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and the rest, Segal asks several pertinent questions, such as "Why do they change over time?

Testament Canon (2d ed.; The First Jowett Lectures; London: A. & C. Black, 1913; repr. with Introduction by George W. Buchanan, under the title *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity*; New York: Schocken, 1963). Charles's study was a masterpiece in its time, but by the late 1960s, when Nickelsburg set to work, it was long out of date. See also the succinct review of the most important texts in Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9–34.

5. Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004). Segal's book has been widely and very positively reviewed. Reviewers have expressed appreciation for the scope of the study and its penetrating analysis of key texts and religious traditions. For a more theological and philosophical approach, see also Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection: History and Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); and Carlos Blanco, *Why Resurrection? An Introduction into the Belief in the Afterlife in Judaism and Christianity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 2011).

6. Segal, *Life after Death*, 3.

What social and historical issues lie behind these changes? How do the doctrines themselves condition further discussion and conflict with the various communities as they relate to other communities who value the same traditions?"[7] These questions are quite relevant for the present study.

Two years after the appearance of Segal's book Jaime Clark-Soles published a very learned study that focused on death and afterlife ideas in the New Testament.[8] Clark-Soles focuses on Paul, the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Petrine letters. He identifies a number of pastoral and ecclesiastical factors at work in articulating these ideas and notes that the writers of the New Testament do not always describe these ideas the same way.

What is conspicuous in these helpful studies is the absence of discussion of texts that were composed and circulated in the second century. Although Segal makes passing reference to the *Gospel of Peter* (hereafter *GPet*),[9] whose interesting contribution to our topic will be explored later in this study, his survey of the primary literature jumps from the New Testament to early Jewish pseudepigrapha and rabbinic and Islamic writings. There are a number of second-century writings that need to be taken into account. Among these is a work known as the *Acts of Pilate*, a work with a complex history of composition. Also of importance are several writings, mostly from the second century CE, that variously criticize or defend the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus and his followers. What we shall observe is that Christian interpretation and defence of the resurrection are in important ways responses to pagan challenges and, in some cases, to scepticism and questions within Christian communities themselves.

7. Ibid., 23.

8. Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006). See also the essays in Stephen Barton and Graham N. Stanton (eds.), *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden* (London: SPCK, 1994); Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (McMaster New Testament Studies 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); Marie-Émile Boismard, *Faut-il encore parler de "résurrection"?* (Paris: Cerf, 1995); ET: *Our Victory Over Death: Resurrection?* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999); Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (eds.), *Resurrection* (JSNTSup 186; RILP 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Reimund Bieringer, Veronica Koperski, and Bianca Lataire (eds.), *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht* (BETL 165; Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 2002); and Robert B. Stewart (ed.), *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

9. Segal, *Life after Death*, 534–36.

Recently published scroll fragments from Qumran also lend urgency to the need to re-examine our topic. Again, Segal offers a competent and insightful survey of most of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but his focus is more on the Essene community than it is on the individual Scrolls themselves.[10] Overlooked in this survey, perhaps because it is not thought not to be an Essene composition, is the fragmentary 4Q521 (that is, document 521 from Qumran's cave 4, also known as the *Messianic Apocalypse*). This important text specifically links the appearance of the Messiah with healing and resurrection. More will be said about this text in due course.

In Second Temple Judaism (see Segal's dates above), the concept of resurrection came to clear expression.[11] Resurrection faith lay at the centre of the Christian movement from its very beginning and in the second century became the focus of the new movement's apologetic. This study will trace the origin and emergence of resurrection ideas in the wider context of afterlife beliefs. Attention will be given to the social, religious,

10. Ibid., 296–308, 317–21. Segal skilfully probes the ideas found in the Scrolls that most scholars recognize as produced by the men of Qumran, widely identified as the "Essenes," as writers in late antiquity called them. Segal fills in some of the blanks by making judicious comparisons with what Josephus, the first-century Jewish apologist and historian, says of the Essenes. For a compelling and comprehensive collection of contributions focused on the spectrum of resurrection belief, interpretation and theology across the New Testament, the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, see J. H. Charlesworth, with C. D. Elledge, J. L. Crenshaw, H. Boers, and W. W. Willis Jr., *Resurrection: The Origin and Future of a Biblical Doctrine* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006).

11. In this study I follow Paul Foster's broad outline to define "Israelite" and "Jewish." Foster states: "The terms 'Israelite' and 'Jewish' are used to refer to what is broadly a continuous religious movement with strong nationalistic connections. The term Jewish is used to denote that phase of the movement after the return from exile in the late sixth century BCE, when the nation was reconstituted and the rebuilding of the Second Temple was commissioned with permission of a royal edict issued by Cyrus II (Ezra 1.2-4). The Israelite period could be defined as ending with the deportation of the ten northern tribes by the Assyrians in 721 BCE. However, since the institutional system of religion in Judah remained relatively stable until the exile, for heuristic reasons the label 'Israelite' will be retained to describe the religious system until the Babylonian exile in 587 BCE. This distinction is important not just for purposes of nomenclature. Rather, in relation to the topic of the afterlife, Persian influences may incipiently re-shape Jewish conceptions of the possibility of post-mortem existence." See P. Foster, "The Hebrew Bible / LXX and the Development of Ideas on Afterlife in Matthew," in W. Weren, H. van de Sandt, and J. Verheyden (eds.), *Life Beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel: Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?* (BTS 13; Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 3–25, here p. 3 n. 1.

and political forces at work in the first two centuries of the Christian church, especially in reference to the proclamation and defence of the resurrection of Jesus.

The history of the resurrection idea provides the context for the present study, which focuses on the resurrection narrative in the Akhmîm gospel fragment. I argue that this fragment, which may well be the *GPet* condemned by Bishop Serapion ca. 200,[12] can be dated to the second half of the second century, not by appeals to P.Oxy 2949 or P.Oxy 4009 (or other related materials), but by comparative analysis, an analysis that demonstrates that the fragment exemplifies an apologetic that addresses quite specifically second-century pagan criticisms of the resurrection narratives of the earlier gospels (viz., the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). I shall further argue that the apologetic of the Akhmîm gospel fragment was also intended to assure second-century Christians that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus rested upon actual eyewitness testimony *of the resurrection event itself*, not merely the discovery of the empty tomb and later reports of resurrection appearances.

Herein lies the distinctive contribution of this study. Scholars have argued that the Akhmîm gospel fragment originated in the second century because of the assumption that it is an excerpt of the otherwise lost *GPet*. To move this identification beyond mere assumption some scholars have argued that at least one, possibly two, papyrus fragments, which date to about the end of the second century, attest the text of the Akhmîm gospel fragment. This textual evidence, however, is not convincing. In reality, we have no physical basis for dating the text of the Akhmîm fragment to the second century. Furthermore, the brief description of the *GPet* provided by Eusebius, that the *GPet* exhibits docetic tendencies, does not match the extant Akhmîm fragment. I argue instead that the text of the Akhmîm fragment did originate in the second century *because of its fit with second-century polemic and apologetic*. It provides an answer to second-century Jewish and Pagan criticism and polemic and does so primarily by extending the apologetic begun by the Matthean evangelist.

Because the text that I am studying is extant only as an excerpt in a fifth-century codex, I will have to present evidence that will demonstrate two important points: (1) that the Akhmîm gospel fragment is a fragment of a second-century work, possibly the *GPet*, and (2) that the text of this gospel fragment closely resembles the original second-century text. If no compelling evidence can be offered in support of these two points, then

12. The identity of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the second-century *GPet* is assumed by many, but, as will be shown, the actual evidence for this identification is quite slim.

we are not in a position to appeal to the Akhmîm fragment as evidence of second-century Christian apologetic and, conversely, of second-century Jewish and pagan criticism of Christian resurrection faith.

It is important to emphasize at this point that my study does not presuppose the identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *GPet*. The fragment may well be an excerpt of the second-century gospel condemned by Bishop Serapion, but it might not be. The fragment may belong to another lost gospel, perhaps another one associated with the apostle Peter. What is important for my purposes is to show that the Akhmîm gospel fragment is indeed an excerpt of a second-century text that truly contributes to our understanding of polemical and apologetic dynamics, centred on the question of the resurrection of Jesus, from this important period in the life of the early Christian movement.

The remaining eight chapters treat the initial discovery of the Akhmîm Codex and its analysis and the origins and development of the concept of resurrection. Chapters 7 and 8 represent the heart of the study. I shall briefly summarize the parameters of Chapters 2 through 7. Chapter 9 is devoted to the summary and final conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews and assesses the discovery of the Akhmîm Codex during nineteenth-century French archaeological excavations in ancient Panopolis (in modern Egypt). I underscore the uncertainties and vicissitudes surrounding the discovery and initial analysis of this codex. Although the discovery initially generated a great deal of excitement and a number of publications, some of which were learned and quite useful, one of the most distinctive features of the new discovery—ostensibly an eyewitness account of the resurrection of Jesus—has been largely neglected. Even a recently published work, by far the most extensive treatment of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, scarcely treats this remarkable element.

Chapter 3 analyses the physical properties of the Akhmîm discovery, treating matters of papyrology, codicology, palaeography, and archaeology. The purpose is to gain a clearer understanding of this remarkable find and to discover what light, if any, analysis of the discovery as an artifact may shed on the origin, history, date, and purpose of the text, factors which are very important for interpretation.

Chapter 4 examines post-mortem (or afterlife) beliefs in the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament). One could reach back further (to ancient Egyptian and Babylonian concepts of immortality, or even back to pre-historical times, where archaeological findings suggest that earliest human civilizations assumed and accommodated religious and burial

traditions that evidently presupposed some sort of afterlife belief[13]), but because the objective is to cast light on early Christian resurrection faith the ancient writings that make up the Hebrew Bible are sufficient for the task at hand. Christian origins are rooted in the Hebrew Bible, not in religious and philosophical ideas that pre-date the Hebrew Bible.[14]

Although there are only traces of post-mortem beliefs in the Hebrew Bible, there are a few texts, such as Isa 26:19 and Hos 6:2, that laid a foundation for new ideas, such as we see in Daniel, chronologically the last book written to gain admittance into the canon of Jewish Scripture.

This chapter is important, not simply because it traces the beginnings of after-life ideas from which concepts of resurrection could emerge, but because some scholars think much of the gospel Passion story derives from the Hebrew Bible. If so, then the contribution of the Hebrew Bible for understanding the development of the resurrection narratives, in both the first-century New Testament gospels and in the later extra-canonical gospels and gospel-like writings, must be taken very seriously.

Chapter 5 traces the emergence of the concept of resurrection in Late Second temple Judaism. Here I overlap with Nickelsburg's study, but I shall be more narrowly focused on resurrection and will take into account

13. Perhaps the most startling recent discovery is the temple that is being excavated at Göbekli Tepe in southeastern Turkey. Archaeologists and historians believe this temple suggests that theism sparked the beginnings of civilization (and not the reverse). For an early report, see Charles C. Mann, "The Birth of Religion," *National Geographic* 214, no. 6 (June 2011): 34–59. Neanderthal burials suggest that belief in afterlife reaches back to the very beginnings of humankind. On this point, see Michael Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (3d ed.; College Station, TX: Texas A & M Press, 1999), 147–51.

14. Perhaps it is necessary to state this and not simply assume it, in light of recent theses in popular literature, in which it is claimed that Christianity emerged from some sort of primordial religious concept, whose origins reach back to great antiquity. In this connection most Canadians will immediately think of Tom Harpur's tour de force *The Pagan Christ: Is Blind Faith Killing Christianity?* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2005). Harpur contends that there never was a Jesus of history, that Christianity is nothing more than the embodiment of an Egyptian myth. Harpur depends upon and distorts in his own ways the theosophy of the pseudo-Egyptology promoted in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Gerald Massey and Alvin Boyd Kuhn. Neither man was a recognized Egyptologist. No credible historian accepts any part of this extraordinary thesis. For a recent debunking of *The Pagan Christ*, see Stanley E. Porter and Stephen J. Bedard, *Unmasking the Pagan Christ* (Toronto: Clements, 2006). Exponents of similar odd theories will be found in Europe, North America, and elsewhere.

some texts that came to light in more recent years. Nickelsburg's interpretation of key texts against the backdrop of war and persecution provides an approach that will greatly aid my own analysis.

We shall find that the explicit belief in life-after-death arose in the intertestamental period as an answer to a crisis in which Jews faced social upheaval and savage reprisals. The perplexing theological question of *Torah*-obedient Jews suffering martyrdom provided the social context for writings that speak to troubling questions of theodicy. The political and social context of Jews in the intertestamental period in some ways parallels the challenges Christians faced in the first and second centuries and may well have shaped their understanding of resurrection.

Chapter 6 assesses the resurrection ideas that are expressed in the writings of the New Testament. I examine the resurrection of Jesus, as described in the Synoptic Gospels and as interpreted by his earliest followers, including the apostle Paul. I also explore in what ways the resuscitations that took place during the ministry of Jesus and his disciples may have influenced the thinking of the followers of Jesus in the aftermath of Easter. In other words, the raisings of the dead in Jesus' ministry and in the various post-Easter ministries of his disciples may well have influenced how Christians interpreted the resurrection of Jesus.

Chapter 7 focuses on second-century resurrection polemic and apologetic. It is here that my study will make a number of original contributions to this important field of study. I will show how the Akhmîm gospel fragment finds its place in the ongoing cut and thrust of second-century polemic and apologetic centred on early Christianity's proclamation of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. To do this it is necessary to relate the Akhmîm text to other second-century writings, both Christian and pagan, which debate the strengths and weaknesses of Christian claims. Some of this literature has not been given the attention that it deserves. Accordingly, my purpose here is, as Nickelsburg himself put it, "to fill the gap."

In this chapter I will show that the scathing criticism and polemic of second-century writers like Celsus and Porphyry, who ridiculed the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus on the basis that it is little more than the confused testimony of frightened women, is addressed by the resurrection narrative in the Akhmîm gospel fragment. The scepticism emanating from the synagogue of the second century, as attested in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, is also addressed by the Akhmîm gospel narrative. Moreover, the polemical orientation of the Akhmîm gospel toward the Jewish people, on the one hand, and the sympathetic portrait of Pontius Pilate, on the other, coheres with the

sharp rise in Roman anti-Semitism[15] in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt, which came to a bloody and costly end in 135 CE. Other features exhibited in the Akhmîm fragment, such as its polymorphic Christology, its distinctive portrayal of the cross, and its use of the expression "Lord's Day," all point to the Akhmîm gospel's date of composition in the middle of the second century.

The chapter, however, will begin with a lengthy treatment of the rise of anti-Semitism in the second century, largely brought on by the Jewish rebellions in the first and second centuries. My purpose here is to show how elements of this anti-Semitism is reflected in the Akhmîm gospel fragment, thus supporting a second-century date for a text of which the fragment is only a small portion.

Chapter 8 will probe further the social context of the Akhmîm gospel fragment. I shall examine the fragment's description of the risen Jesus in the light of the polymorphic Christology that came to imaginative expression in the second century. I shall also examine the sympathetic portrait of Pontius Pilate and how that compares to other writings, such as the *Acts of Pilate*, were composed in the second century. This chapter will also compare the Akhmîm fragment to the emergence of Greek romance novels in the late first century and on into the second century. A number of New Testament scholars have rightly shown that second-century Christian writings, such as the apocryphal books of Acts, share some of these literary characteristics and were probably influenced by the Greek novels. My analysis shows the Akhmîm fragment fits well in this literary environment, thus lending further support to a second-century date. The chapter will conclude with a study of a number of other minor features, all of which support the proposed second-century date.

In *Chapter 9* I sum up my findings and bring the study to a conclusion, once again underscoring the importance of situating the Akhmîm gospel fragment in its proper place and time through comparative analysis. The relevant evidence is abundant, but it has been largely overlooked or misunderstood.

15. Throughout the present work the word "anti-Semitism" appears. No doubt some will think that I should use "anti-Judaism." For my purposes I believe it is more helpful to speak of "anti-Semitism," because this expression is more inclusive. It can refer to dislike of the Jewish people, dislike of Jewish religion, and dislike of Jewish culture and even the land of Israel itself. On the other hand, "anti-Judaism," taken at face value, only refers to "Judaism," the religion of the Jewish people and not necessarily to the Jewish people themselves. The anti-Semitism that I reference in this study, especially in Chapter 7, applies to a number of features. My use of the word "anti-Semitism" should not, of course, be taken in a modern sense.

The importance of my investigation for research in the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the second-century *GPet* can hardly be exaggerated. If a firmer foundation is not laid, there is no real justification for viewing this fragment as a second-century document or as related to the *GPet* discussed by Bishop Serapion. Scholars who engage in this research must become better acquainted with the challenges that we face and recognize the need for criteria that take into account more critically the data we have.

Finally, a word needs to be said about method and the parameters of my research. My method is comparative, historical, and exegetical. That is, I compare potentially related texts, to see what light they shed on one another, to see in what ways, if any, they explain each other. I also attempt to trace a history of development. That is, how a concept evolves, taking new forms, becoming more complex, and the like. Throughout I attempt to exegete the texts deemed relevant in their original language. In the present study this will usually mean reading and interpreting Greek texts, though sometimes Latin or Hebrew/Aramaic will come into play. I readily acknowledge that I have freely consulted the English (and sometimes French and German) translations published by accomplished scholars, but I have myself read the primary texts in their original languages. I will say more about methods in Chapter 3.

One of my principal goals in this study is to formulate what the Germans call the *Überlieferungsgeschichte* of the resurrection, primarily of Jesus but also of the closely related hope of the resurrection of believers. The German word *Überlieferungsgeschichte* literally means "history of tradition" (and in fact it is sometimes partially latinized as *Traditionsgeschichte*). It is not to be confused with the task of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or the "history of effect," that is, the story of how an idea has impacted thought and culture. To be sure, *Wirkungsgeschichte* is closely related to *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, but it is not the same thing. Whereas the former attempts to trace the contribution that an idea has made (to art, literature, society, etc.), the latter attempts to trace the development of the idea itself. This is what the present study attempts to do. My concern is to follow the development of the idea of resurrection as it came to expression in the Akhmîm gospel fragment and to explore the political and religious factors that influenced this development.[16]

16. I should mention briefly that *Überlieferungsgeschichte* is not quite the same as "trajectory," a term whose usage in biblical studies has been defined and put to use by the American New Testament scholar James Robinson. Robinson sees it as an improvement over *Überlieferungsgeschichte* in that it underscores the almost inevitable direction that the "forces at work" give to the development of an idea. On this, see J. M. Robinson, "Introduction: The Dismantling and Reassembling of the Categories

My contention is that no *Überlieferungsgeschichte* of the resurrection can be complete apart from taking into account key developments in the polemic and apologetic that emerged—closely linked to and growing out of the New Testament Gospel narratives—that we see in the Akhmîm gospel fragment, the *Acts of Pilate*, and other second-century literature. My investigation sheds light on how the early Church came to understand and defend the resurrection of Jesus, the central datum of the new faith. I believe analysis of some of this neglected literature will allow us to do just that.

The Akhmîm gospel fragment, which may well be the *GPet* condemned by Bishop Serapion, can be dated to the second half of second century, not by appeals to P.Oxy 2949 or P.Oxy 4009 (or other related materials), but by comparative analysis, an analysis that demonstrates that the fragment exemplifies an apologetic that addresses second-century pagan criticisms of the resurrection narratives of the earlier gospels. The Akhmîm text attempts to demonstrate that Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus rested upon actual eyewitness testimony *of the resurrection event itself*, not merely the discovery of the empty tomb and later reports of resurrection appearances.

In the chapter that follows I review the discovery and critical discussion of the Akhmîm Codex and the gospel excerpt contained within it, which most scholars believe belongs to the *GPet*. The adventures and misadventures of this manuscript's discovery and the attendant errors and assumptions are instructive and cautionary. Careful review of this intriguing story shows just how tentative some of the longstanding assumptions and conclusions really are.

of New Testament Scholarship," in J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 1–19. In my view the "trajectories" concept is too deterministic and as such probably reflects a touch of Hegelianism. (Robinson's scholarship is deeply influenced by German method and thought.) Few historians and biblical scholars have followed Robinson. For a brief but incisive critique, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 20–24. Sanders prefers to speak of "patterns," rather than "trajectories." He states: "But the term trajectory nevertheless implies *sequential development and implicit goal*…" (p. 21); "A lot of things move in trajectories, however, and the trajectory paradigm may mislead one into attempting to impose sequential development where none exists" (p. 23). I agree with Sanders.

Chapter 2

A Resurrection Narrative Unearthed from an Ancient Tomb: The Discovery of the Akhmîm Codex

In many ways, Gospels scholars are indebted to Napoleon's vision of himself, "Great reputations are only made in the Orient; Europe is too small,"[1] for the domino effect that led to the eventual discovery of arguably the only extant fragment of the *Gospel of Peter*. The late nineteenth century saw an explosion of manuscript discoveries, especially in North Africa, as long forgotten burial sites and trash heaps yielded up literary treasure troves. Some of these textual treasures were known before only in the writings of the Church Fathers. Although scholars recognized the importance of these finds, with the passage of time and the discovery of other texts, it is now possible to discuss such fragments against the wider literary background of early Christianity. More than a century after their discovery, these texts have inspired major motion pictures, best-selling popular books, and numerous cable television programs highlighting scholars' opinions of these finds. Richard Bauckham has observed, "The study of Gospel traditions outside the canonical Gospels is the Cinderella of Gospels scholarship."[2] The discovery of extra-canonical gospels brought to an eager and often credulous audience the promise of hidden records, sayings, and activities from the life of Jesus and of his closest followers. Upper Egypt and the necropolis of Akhmîm proved to be no exception, as it generously yielded artefacts and fragmentary remains of biblical texts.

1. Elie Krettly, *Souvenirs historiques* (2d ed.; Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2003), 42.

2. Richard Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels: Problems and Prospects," in David W. Wenham (ed.), *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels* (Gospel Perspectives 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 405. Note that Bauckham said this almost thirty years ago. His comment is even more apropos today.

But before reviewing the Akhmîm find, it will be helpful to go back a century and say a few things about the origins of French archaeology in North Africa. Had it not been for the exploits of the "little emperor," there might not have been a discovery at Akhmîm.

1. *European Colonialism and the Golden Age of Archaeology*

If wars could be won on scale alone, Napoleon's 1798 amphibious foray into Egypt,[3] inimitable as it was, looms large in history for sheer size and proportion.[4] Napoleon Bonaparte, like Alexander the Great (founding Alexandria) and Octavian[5] (later known as Augustus), set his imperialist sights on the land of Egypt. All of twenty-eight years old, Napoleon led his armada of over 300 ships across the 2,000-mile sea voyage to Alexandria. Juan Cole's accounting of the assault is helpful:

> His [Napoleon's] vast naval force stretched for miles, composed of thirteen ships of the line, seventeen frigates, 30 brigs, and nearly 250 corvettes, gunboats, galleys, and merchant ships. If one counted, some 54,000 men, equal to the size of a small city of the era, jostled through the choppy Mediterranean.[6]

Napoleon viewed Egypt as the gateway to the Orient and envisaged far more than French military dominance in the Middle East:

> I saw the way to achieve all my dreams… I would found a religion, I saw myself marching on the way to Asia, mounted on an elephant, a turban on my head, and in my hand a new Koran that I would have composed to suit my needs. In my enterprises I would have combined the experiences of the two worlds, exploiting the realm of all history for my own profit.[7]

3. On 30 June 1798, six weeks after setting out from Toulon, Napoleon's armada approached the shores of Alexandria.

4. Napoleon's great invasion was rivalled only by Xerxes' colossal Persian navy, which numbered some 1,200 triremes in the fifth century BCE. As was Napoleon's fleet, Xerxes' fleet was defeated by a combination of heavy weather and a tenacious enemy with greater naval skills. See J. R. Hale, *Lords of the Sea: The Epic Story of the Athenian Navy and the Birth of Democracy* (New York: Viking, 2009).

5. Egypt was a strategic region in the Mediterranean world for producing vast food supplies for much of the Roman Empire.

6. Juan Ricardo Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 2008), 1.

7. Claire Elisabeth de Rémusat, *Mémoires*, vol. 1 (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1880), 274.

In his pursuit to become emperor of the East, Napoleon's *attaché* included some of the brightest minds in France, known as *savants* (from the French *savoir*, "knowing"). Scholars across most disciplines accompanied the military expedition. A list of the different professional groups included amongst the *savants* gives an indication of the sheer scale of this civilian aspect of the expedition: architects; artists and composers; astronomers; botanists; chemists and physicists; surgeons and doctors; archaeologists and geometers; printers; naval engineers; geographical engineers (including cartographers); constructors of bridges and highways; men of literature, economists and antiquarians; mechanical engineers; mineralogists; Orientalists; pharmacists; and zoologists.[8] The alliance of war with science was a historical first.

The son of a lawyer and from a family of few means, Napoleon was not educated as a scientist, but still managed to acquire skill in the social sciences and mathematics, which he put to good use in his military engineering experience. While the military invasion of Egypt was a failure, the scholarly efforts were not. The *savants* wasted no time in their 36-month expedition in Egypt discovering the Valley of the Kings, the temples and tombs of Luxor, Dendera, and Philae and perhaps the greatest discovery of all, the Rosetta Stone.[9] Each site was measured and mapped, recording in meticulous detail the splendours of Egypt never before seen by the outside world. Within the first six months in Egypt, the *savants* decided to organize their findings into a publication. The research was so voluminous that the Imperial Press would not publish the first volume of *Description de l'Égypte* until 1809. A staggering twenty-three volumes would be published through 1828, three of which were the largest books that had ever been printed, standing over forty-three inches tall. The completed series included 837 hand-coloured engravings, which captured virtually every aspect of Egyptian culture. The influence of *Description de l'Égypte* as the precursor to the golden age of archaeology can hardly be overstated.

Napoleon's scientific expedition in Egypt is far more distinguished than his military campaign. In October 1801 the last of Napoleon's army left Egypt for France, surrendering to the British. Eighty-nine years after Napoleon landed at Alexandria, a team of French archaeologists working in Upper Egypt unearthed a codex that contained an additional narrative

8. Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 8.

9. Lt. Pierre François Xavier Bouchard discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799. In 1802 the French surrendered to the British and reluctantly surrendered the Rosetta Stone. The British Museum has been the home of the Rosetta Stone since 1802.

depicting the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth—quite possibly the *Gospel of Peter*, and so began the great manuscript discoveries of the twentieth century in the arid surroundings of Upper Egypt.

2. *Mission archéologique française au Caire*[10]

The French archaeological mission in Cairo commenced on 28 December 1880 and saw the establishment of a permanent French school of archaeology in Cairo.[11] Nine years later, the institute became known as the *Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* (or IFAO, French Institute of Oriental Archaeology). As of the date of this book, the institute remains based in Cairo primarily focusing on continued archaeological excavations and publications (the institute houses a library of 80,000 volumes.)[12] Gaston Maspero served as the first director-general of excavations and antiquities at the mission, having arrived in 1880. Like the *savants* before him, Maspero's legacy would be in publishing the archaeological discoveries in a four-volume tome known as *Mémoires publiés par les members de la Mission archéologique française au Caire.*[13] Just as the *Description de l'Égypte*'s publishing was delayed due to the amount of the material, so Maspero's publishing was set back because of the enormity of the finds.

During the winter-season dig of 1886/87 at Akhmîm in Upper Egypt, French archaeologists from the Mission archéologique française au Caire discovered a small vellum codex at a Christian burial site.[14] Interred within one of the graves were skeletal remains and a small codex consisting of thirty-three leaves. Although the codex was discovered in a grave in a Christian cemetery, the specific grave is no longer identifiable. The dig resulted in the discovery of another manuscript of an arithmetical and geometrical nature.[15] Bouriant described the location of the grave in the *editio princeps*, "*le tombeau du propriétaire du manuscrit se trouve à*

10. Also known as the *École française du Caire* ("French School of Cairo").

11. www.ifao.egnet.net/ (accessed 1 February 2012).

12. The IFAO has been publishing annually in Cairo since 1901, one of the oldest and best known Egyptological journals: *Le Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale* (Bulletin of the French Institute of Eastern Archaeology), or BIFAO.

13. G. Maspero (ed.), *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* (4 vols.; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1884).

14. Urbain Bouriant, *Fragments du texte grec du livre d'Enoch et de quelques écrits attribués à saint Pierre* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1892).

15. J. Baillet, "Le papyrus mathématique d'Akhmîm," in *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* (tome IX, fasc. 1; Paris: l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1892), 1–90.

environ 200 mètres de la colline dans la direction nord-est" ("the tomb of the owner of the manuscript is about 200 meters from the hill in a north-easterly direction").[16] Urbain Bouriant published the *editio princeps* of the Akhmîm codex (P.Cair. 10759) in 1892, five years after its discovery. Bouriant's *editio princeps* comprises only 54 pages. Foster interpreted Bouriant's presentation of the codex in this way:

> Thus, if order of presentation of texts within the volume is of significance, not only did Bouriant consider the text of 1 Enoch of greater significance than those of the other three fragmentary texts, but the placement of the mathematical manuscript prior to the codex edited by Bouriant may perhaps indicate that this was considered as being the more spectacular find.[17]

I concur with Foster's assessment, which in turn is based on Bouriant's assessment:

> The small fragments that I have mentioned (Gospel and Apocalypse of Saint Peter, canonical Gospel) will be published in due course. The importance of the book of Enoch, whose Greek text is only known from short passages reported in Cédrénus and Syncellus, is such that I decided to begin with the publication of its manuscript.[18]

The discovery of this small parchment codex made a huge impact. Bouriant assumed that a fragment of the *GPet*, known only before in Patristic writings, had been discovered: "*Au verso du premier feuillet, c'est-à-dire à la page 2, commence un fragment de l'Évangile de Saint-Pierre, qui se continue jusqu'à la page 10*" ("On the back of the first sheet, that is to say on page 2, begins a fragment of the Gospel of Saint Peter, which continues until page 10").[19] For modern scholarship, the Akhmîm gospel fragment has been a precious text, illustrating the vibrancy and creativity of early Christian communities. Akhmîm lies about sixty miles north of Nag Hammadi, where the famous Nag Hammadi library was discovered shortly after the end of World War II. The Akhmîm gospel fragment was the first extra-canonical gospel discovered in the modern period.

16. Ibid., 93.

17. Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (TENT 4; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 6.

18. Bouriant, *Editio Princeps*, 94: "Les petits fragments que je viens de mentionner (Évangile et Apocalypse de Saint-Pierre, Évangile canonique) seront publiés en temps et lieu. L'importance du livre d'Enoch, dont le texte grec n'est connu que par de courts passages rapportés dans Cédrénus et le Syncelle, est telle que je me suis décidé à commencer par lui la publication du manuscrit."

19. Ibid., 94.

A survey of the secondary works, relating to the Akhmîm gospel fragment (almost always assumed to be the *GPet*), reveals a propensity to refer to the manuscripts as being discovered in a "monk's tomb." This monkish identity seems to be little more than an inference, based on the theological nature of the manuscript and not from the excavation of the tomb itself. According to Peter Van Minnen, "Any Greek-speaking inhabitant of Panopolis with a penchant for apocryphal literature may have been buried in the cemetery. It would have been natural to include a codex with his or her favourite texts in the tomb."[20] Van Minnen is quite correct. After all, books have been found in other Egyptian tombs and without any reason to think that the interred were monks.[21] The cemetery, in which the

20. Peter Van Minnen, "The Akhmîm Gospel of Peter," in Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (eds.), *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte* (TUGAL 158; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 53–60, here 54.

21. Besides the Akhmîm codex, the Tchacos Codex, containing the controversial *Gospel of Judas*, was discovered in a Coptic Christian burial cave, along with three other codices. In all probability so was the Berlin Gnostic Codex (BG 8502). In none of these cases do we have reason to believe the burial sites were monastic. The Egyptian practice of being buried with a book or books raises serious doubts about the "official" story of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices, said to have been found in a jar not far from the Nile River. The entire story of the peasant brothers, who claim that they were looking for fertilizer (generated by the Nile, which seasonally overflows its banks), smacks of myth and apologetic. It is more likely that the Gnostic codices were looted, as were the Tchacos Codex and the Berlin Codex, from Coptic Christian burial caves in the general vicinity of Nag Hammadi. Indeed, in one account a human skeleton was supposedly found buried atop or alongside the mysterious jar. Grave robbery is the more likely scenario. For discussion of the Egyptian practice of burying holy books with the deceased, see M. Krause, "Die Texte von Nag Hammadi," in B. Aland (ed.), *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 216–43, esp. 243. It is far more likely that the peasants' story of finding the codices in a jar near the Nile was concocted to avoid prosecution and perhaps also the ire of Coptic Christians. For more on this intriguing feature, see Mark Goodacre, "How Reliable Is the Story of the Nag Hammadi Discovery?," *JSNT* 35 (2013): 303–22. For the "official" story of the finding of the Gnostic codices, see M. W. Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 13–31. Meyer credits James Robinson ("the scholarly sleuth who pieced together the story"), who travelled to Egypt and conducted interviews. The quotation is from p. 30. Robinson himself tells the story in several publications. For one example, see J. M. Robinson, "From the Cliff to Cairo: The Study of the Discoverers and Middlemen of the Nag Hammadi Codices," in Bernard Barc (ed.), *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–23 août 1978)* (Québec City: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 21–58.

grave was found had been used to bury Christians from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries, but the location of the grave, two hundred meters from the oldest section of the cemetery, suggests that the Christian's tomb, in which the codex was discovered, was not utilized at the very beginning of that period.

The late funerary material from Akhmîm was an epic discovery. Unfortunately, it appears that scholars will never know more than a fraction of what was really discovered by Gaston Maspero and the Mission archéologique française au Caire. The result of Maspero's pioneering work paved the way for the discovery of the gospel fragment. Private collections, as well as museum collections, in every continent of the globe, contain Ptah-Sokar-Osiris statues, papyri, stelae, offering tables, Isis and Nephthys statuettes, canopic chests, mummies, cartonnage, funerary beds, coffins, and even sarcophagi from Akhmîm. Despite the efforts of archaeologists, scholars and locals, looters still managed to steal artefacts from the necropolis. This appears to have become a recurrent theme in the mystery surrounding the current whereabouts of the Akhmîm codex. As Depauw wrote of the initial discovery of the necropolis:

> In 1884 Gaston Maspero discovered the necropolis of Akhmîm, and quite a discovery it was. His report mentioning thousands of bodies and their accompanying funerary equipment suggest a chaos of an almost apocalyptic order. The material apparently overwhelmed the excavators, but the local population and some state officials sensed an opportunity and seized it. The more unfortunate mummies were sold to paper manufacturers or ended up as fuel for the Egyptian railways; much more aesthetically appealing funerary apparel was sold to visiting travellers. Only a few items ever made it to the inventory of the Egyptian Museum in Boulaq.[22]

Based on the location of the grave, Bouriant claimed the burial took place not before the beginning of the eighth century, nor after the end of the twelfth. Bouriant and his team were the only scholars to have visited the exact location of this tomb. However, in recent years scholars have called into question Bouriant's dating of the manuscript, in part due to palaeographic analysis. In any event, one has little idea how long the codex was in circulation before being committed to burial.[23] Consequently, the dating of the burial tomb and the codex are not one and the same.

22. Mark DePauw, "The Late Funerary Material from Akhmîm," in A. Egberts, Brian P. Muhs, and Joep van der Vliet (eds.), *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 71–81, here 71.

23. Study of the well-preserved early Christian Bibles (such as the fourth-century Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) shows that books were sometimes in use for centuries

3. *The Akhmîm Gospel Fragment: Preliminary Observations*

Although much attention of late has focused on the gospels of *Thomas* and *Judas*, the first extra-canonical gospel to be discovered during the early days of what is now known as biblical archaeology was the Akhmîm gospel fragment, widely assumed to be the *GPet*.[24] Over eighty years prior to the publication of Robert Funk's *The Five Gospels*, Theodore Zahn referred to the fragment as the "fifth gospel."[25] The fragment has been the subject of a resurgence of scholarly attention and, to complicate matters still further, the codex has apparently been lost.[26] This scholarly interest has emphasized primarily the Christology of the gospel fragment and its relationship to the canonical gospels. These are issues central to any study of newly discovered extra-canonical texts. However, the most striking feature of this fragment, the embellished resurrection tradition,

before being retired. Similar great longevity is also attested in the pagan world. See George W. Houston, "Papyrological Evidence for Book Collections and Libraries in the Roman Empire," in W. A. Johnson and H. N. Parker (eds.), *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 233–67, esp. 238–54.

24. The fragmentary text designated P.Vindob. G 2325, also known as "the so-called Fayyum Fragment," discovered in 1885, may challenge this point. It is difficult to determine if this fragment is an extra-canonical gospel or a re-working of Mark 14. This fragment could be from an extra-canonical gospel, but given the uncertainty, the Akhmîm fragment still has the strongest claim.

25. The Jesus Seminar, headquartered in southern California, has dubbed the *Gospel of Thomas* as the "fifth gospel," but in fact the first writing identified by scholars as the fifth gospel is the Akhmîm gospel fragment. Some readers will find it interesting to learn that long ago Theodore Zahn penned the following dedication: *Herrn D. Ernst Luthardt, dem hochverdienten Ausleger des vierten Evangeliums widmet zu seinem 70. Geburtstag diese Untersuchung eines fünften Evangeliums in dankbarer Verehrung und Freundschaft der Verfasser* ("To Dr. Ernst Luthardt, the highly merited interpreter of the fourth Gospel, the author dedicates on his 70th birthday this study of a fifth gospel in thankful reverence and friendship"). See Theodore Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Petrus* (Erlangen: Deichert, 1893), dedication page.

26. The codex in which the gospel fragment is collated has been catalogued under more than one accession number and title: P.Cair. 10759, Codex Panopolitanus, Cairo codex 1075, Akhmîm Codex, Gizeh catalogue number 1323, Mss. of Giza. For further discussion, see Jeremiah J. Johnston, "The Gospel of Peter: The Importance of a North African Discovery," *Sapientia Logos* 3 (2011): 202–3. I note that the Leuven database has recently updated their catalogue location reference to read "formerly Cairo, Egyptian Museum."

has not been the focus of scholarly discussion.[27] Paul Foster's exhaustive 555-page monograph on the gospel fragment discusses numerous critical issues and should finally put to rest the question of its dependence on the canonicals. However, in his introduction, Foster does not discuss the resurrection narrative in detail. Foster limits his comments only to the commentary section, but fails to recognize that one of the purposes of the text was to highlight the centrality of resurrection faith for the author's audience. The present study fills a crucial gap in scholarship relating to resurrection traditions. My hope is that scholars will more fully appreciate the contribution that this gospel fragment makes to resurrection apologetic.

This study focuses on the apologetic concerns of the author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment. Curiously enough, this fragment is the only Christian text that describes the actual resurrection of Jesus. In it we find a vivid account that appears to be an attempt to eliminate all ambiguities in the resurrection story. The fragment, which most scholars date to the second half of the second century,[28] is the earliest extant text that contains an account of people witnessing *the resurrection event itself*.

> ἰδόντες οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται ἐκεῖνοι ἐξύπνισαν τὸν κεντυρίωνα καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους· παρῆσαν γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ φυλάσσοντες. καὶ ἐξηγουμένων αὐτῶν ἃ εἶδον πάλιν ὅρωσιν ἐξελθόντος ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου τρεῖς ἄνδρες καὶ τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθοῦντας καὶ σταυρὸν ἀκολουθοῦντα αὐτοῖς. καὶ τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγουμένου ὑπ' αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσαν τοὺς οὐρανούς. καὶ φωνῆ[ς] ἤκουον ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λεγούσης· ἐκήρυξας τοῖς κοιμωμένοις; καὶ ὑπακοὴ ἠκούετο ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ [ὅ]τι ναί.
>
> Then those soldiers seeing it awoke the centurion and the elders, for they were present also keeping guard. While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw coming out from the tomb three men, and the two were supporting the one, and a cross following them. And the head of the two reached as far as heaven, but that of the one being led by them surpassed the heavens. And they were hearing a voice from the heavens saying, "Have you preached to those who sleep?" And a response was heard from the cross, "Yes." (Akhmîm fragment 10:38-42)

27. Johnston, "The Gospel of Peter: The Importance of a North African Discovery," 183.

28. For a thorough analysis of the dating of the gospel fragment, see Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (TENT 4; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 169–72.

Because no one in the canonical gospels actually witnessed the resurrection, in a sense the early Christian confession "God raised Jesus from the dead" remains no more than a theological deduction. The Akhmîm gospel fragment supplies this missing element by providing us with a detailed narrative of Jesus' emergence from the tomb, complete with a number of miraculous events. The author of this gospel appears to be telling the Jesus story in a way that supplies missing details and removes apparent difficulties in the narrative(s) of the canonical gospels. From the author's point of view, important—even essential—details were missing from the canonical narratives. Perhaps the author felt there was too much emphasis on the suffering and death of Jesus, to the detriment of the resurrection narrative. Perhaps also, the author of the gospel fragment probably sensed that there was insufficient and inadequate eyewitness tradition for such an important event.

The gospels and New Testament epistles, which antedate the Akhmîm gospel fragment by about one century (assuming for the moment that it is the *GPet*), proclaim the principal elements of Christian faith: (i) Jesus showed himself alive after death, an element attested by the appearance tradition (cf. 1 Cor 15:3b–7; 1 Thess 1:9b–10); and (ii) Jesus abandoned the grave, an element attested by the empty-tomb tradition (cf. Matt 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12, 22–24; John 20:1–13). However, no New Testament author makes the claim, or makes reference to eyewitness claims, of actually witnessing Jesus' resurrection. The Akhmîm gospel fragment provides this missing element. Supplying a perceived missing element reflects a concern seen in many apocryphal texts. Although the Akhmîm gospel fragment might not be the earliest source for the passion and resurrection of Jesus, it does present a remarkable resurrection scene, which is unique in extant gospel literature and early related traditions. But this scene testifies to much more than apocryphal imagination; it is an important witness to the criticisms and polemic second-century Christians faced.

4. *Why Are Augmentation and Elaboration the Primary Literary Features of the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment?*

A significant portion of the Akhmîm gospel fragment narrative deals with exaggerated post-crucifixion events. Foster refers to the Petrine redaction as "From the pre-modern perspective of the author, heightened miraculous portents function to enable belief. This becomes even more obvious in

the resurrection narratives that follow."[29] Tobias Nicklas has challenged the notion that the gospel fragment is a more miraculous version of the guard-at-the-tomb story:

> Compared to the Gospel of Matthew, the GosPet does not necessarily present the "more fantastic" or "more miraculous" version of the story. Yet, the GosPet's large interest in the sensual perception of the events, even for the opponents, is remarkable.[30]

Surely Nicklas understates the differences between the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the Gospel of Matthew. In the former we have a walking-talking cross, angels whose heads reach the clouds, and a Jesus whose head reaches even greater heights. Surely details such as these qualify as "fantastic" and "more miraculous." In addition to these details the gospel fragment embellishes the Matthean narrative at a number of other points. Details not found in Matthew's Gospel relating to the guard at the tomb story emerge featuring around-the-clock surveillance by Jews and Romans. The author supplies the name Πετρώνιον (gospel fragment 8:31) of the anonymous centurion in the Matthean tradition, which reads simply: Ὁ δὲ ἑκατόνταρχος καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ τηροῦντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἰδόντες (Matt 27:54a). However, after supplementing the narrative with Πετρώνιον (Akhmîm fragment 8:31), our unsophisticated author refers to him several times as κεντυρίων (Akhmîm fragment 8:32; 10:38; 11:45; 11:47, 49). Roman security detachments are enlisted for the important assignment of not allowing the disciples to gain access to Jesus' entombed body. In the gospel fragment, those unsympathetic Roman guards, "guarding two by two," become the first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus (gospel fragment 9:35–36). The apologetic redaction is pronounced. Again, the author augments the tradition in the next scene by having the Romans proclaim the deity of Jesus. Pontius Pilate, fifth Roman Prefect of Judea (26–37 CE),[31] and his centurion both ascribe to Jesus of Nazareth the title "Son of God":

29. Paul Foster, "Passion Traditions in the Gospel of Peter," in A. Merkt, T. Nicklas, and J. Verheyden (eds.), *Gelitten, Gestorben, Auferstanden: Passions- und Ostertraditionen im antiken Christentum* (WUNT 2/273; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 47–68, quotation 66.

30. Tobias Nicklas, "Resurrection in the Gospels of Matthew and Peter: Some Developments," in Weren, van de Sandt, and Verheyden (eds.), *Life Beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel*, 27–41, quotation 40.

31. Thanks to the "Pilate Stone" being unearthed in 1961 at Caesarea Maritima, with the incised words '[Pon]tius Pilate, [pref]ect of Judea," we know Pilate was a prefect, not a procurator. Tacitus wrongly designates Pontius Pilate a procurator

ταῦτα ἰδόντες οἱ περὶ τὸν κεντυρωνα νυκτὸς ἔσπευσαν πρὸς Πειλᾶτον ἀφέντες τὸν τάφον ὃν ἐφύλασσον καὶ ἐξηγήσαντο πάντα ἅπερ εἶδον ἀπωνιῶντες μεγάλως καὶ λέγοντες· ἀληθῶς υἱὸς ἦν θυ.

Seeing these things those who accompanied the centurion rushed by night to Pilate, leaving the tomb which they were guarding, and related everything which they saw, being greatly distressed and saying, "Truly this was God's son." (Akhmîm fragment 11:45)

ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πειλᾶτος ἔφη· ἐγὼ καθαρεύω τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῖν δὲ τοῦτο ἔδοξεν.

Answering, Pilate said, "I am clean from the blood of the son of God, and this is recognized by us." (Akhmîm fragment 11:46)

Ο δὲ ἑκατόνταρχος καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ τηροῦντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἰδόντες τὸν σεισμὸν καὶ τὰ γενόμενα ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα, λέγοντες· ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος.

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt 27:54)

The Akhmîm gospel fragment's embellished story of the resurrection of Jesus attests the challenges and threats the early Christians faced. It is reasonable to suppose that the community behind the gospel fragment felt threatened, which necessitated a tradition absolving the Romans and condemning the Jews.

5. *Why Does the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment's Resurrection Account Contain Polemical, Apologetic, and Pastoral Elements?*

The Akhmîm gospel fragment appears to reflect the tendency in second- and third-century Christianity to exaggerate the miraculous element for evangelistic and apologetic purposes. Within the gospel fragment there is the assumption that remarkable miracles lead to more conversions as the Christian message spreads and no story is more profound than Jesus' resurrection for those purposes. The apologetic concern is very prominent in the gospel fragment's account of the guard at the tomb, including several details without parallel in the canonical gospels that seek to eliminate any doubt regarding the veracity of the claim that Jesus rose

(*Ann.* 15.44). The term is anachronistic: Emperor Claudius is credited in 41 CE as the first to apply the title procurator to his provincial governors. In the New Testament, Pilate is called the "governor" (Matt 27:2, ἡγεμών; Luke 3:1, βήγεμονεύντος).

from the dead.[32] A variety of apologetic speech is used within the gospel fragment. The author of the fragment indulges in a polemic against the Jewish people for his apologetic purposes.

According to writers of the second century, these questions surrounding what actually occurred at the tomb of Jesus remained hotly debated issues. New genres develop to answer inquisitive minds and provide details left out of the central events in the resurrection tradition. One of the intentions of the gospel fragment seems to be answering questions that some sceptics may well have had. The author re-tells the moment of Jesus' resurrection, on the third day, with spectacular details. While the gospel fragment does not give us the raw historical data of Jesus' actual resurrection, we can discern the emergence of a redacted and expanded resurrection motif and begin to draw conclusions on why this type of writing was necessary in second-century Christianity. The author's motivations may have been to embellish the details of the canonical accounts for apologetic, pastoral and polemical purposes to meet the needs of his community.

The research spans first- and second-century Christian history and requires the scholar to have facility in both areas. The subsidiary questions of *Überlieferung*, literary relationship(s), embellishment of the canonicals, and after-life beliefs relating to the apologetic motivations of the gospel fragment's author shall serve as the featured areas of research for the study. The challenges faced by first- and second-century Christians will be investigated, which will provide a more accurate and nuanced historical matrix for the Akhmîm gospel fragment.

6. *Questions That Will Not Be Treated*

I do not address the source-critical issues of the gospel fragment, nor do I engage in text-critical matters. This study is not a source-critical evaluation of the relationship between the gospel fragment and canonical sources. There has been substantial discussion of this important question. This study presupposes the work and a number of conclusions of Paul Foster. That is, I presuppose his source-critical analysis and I accept his critical text.[33] Text-critical questions are not relevant for the study because

32. Charles L. Quarles, "The Gospel of Peter: Does it Contain a Precanonical Resurrection Narrative?," in Stewart (ed.), *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 106–20, here 119.

33. Throughout this study, except where noted, I am following Foster's critical edition of the Greek text and taking into account his English translation; see Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 178–205.

there is only one extant manuscript, P.Cair. 10759. The extant gospel fragment is a single manuscript and like any ancient manuscript, there are a few places where it presents problems in reading the text; yet, by and large, the state of preservation is secure. Further, at this time there are no competing readings so the text-critical tools will not apply.[34] Mine is a tradition-critical analysis focused on the resurrection narrative proper. I will show how this is a neglected feature in scholarship concerned with the Akhmîm gospel fragment. J. K. Elliott has said that it is generally concluded that the gospel fragment is secondary to and dependent on the accounts of the passion in the canonical gospels.[35] This study presupposes this view and stands on the shoulders of previous scholarship. The gospel fragment offers a window into the world of the author and of the people that lived in his time. The fragment may not give us additional historical information about the Jesus of history or how first-century Christians understood the resurrection event, but it does provide insight into the historical circumstances of its author and first readers. Critical analysis of the gospel fragment is essential if we are to appreciate the resurrection ideas of the second century.

J. D. Crossan, along with some members of the Jesus Seminar, brought the Akhmîm gospel fragment (which they assume is the *GPet*) into prominence when he reconstructed a so-called *Cross Gospel* that he believed was embedded within the extant text.[36] Crossan hypothesized that this *Cross Gospel* formed a passion and resurrection narrative that antedates the four Evangelists. While prominent scholars like J. Denker and H. Koester (including his doctoral student B. A. Johnson) argued for

34. I say this, regardless of one's position with respect to P.Oxy. 2949 and P.Oxy. 4009.

35. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 151. For salient observations relating to the evidence of textual criticism, see Stanley E. Porter, "Early Apocryphal Non-Gospel Literature and the New Testament Text," *JGRChJ* 8–9 (2011–12): 192–98, esp. 197.

36. See J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 85–127; "The Cross that Spoke: The Earliest Narrative of the Passion and Resurrection," *Forum* 3 (1987): 3–22; *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); "Thoughts on Two Extra-canonical Gospels," *Semeia* 49 (1990): 155–68; *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); "The Gospel of Peter and the Canonical Gospels: Independence, Dependence or Both?," *Forum* 1/1 (1998): 7–51; "The Gospel of Peter and the Canonical Gospels," in Kraus and Nicklas (eds.), *Das Evangelium nach Petrus*, 117–34

complete independence of the Akhmîm gospel fragment,[37] other scholars view the fragment as dependent on the canonical accounts.[38] Accordingly, Crossan's *Cross Gospel* theory was an innovation, and a highly imaginative one at that. Crossan extracted a pruned version (using some 47 of the extant 60 *Akhmîm Codex* verses) and smuggled his *Cross Gospel* into the first century, asserting the Evangelists dependence on it as the source for their respective canonical resurrection narrative(s). Crossan says, "My first major proposition is that the original *Cross Gospel* is one passion and resurrection narrative from which all four of the intracanonical versions derive."[39] More than a quarter of a century has passed since Crossan's theory was introduced and it has fallen out of favour with few enthusiasts. Nevertheless, Crossan's alterative theory is cited and discussed frequently and uncritically. Paul Mirecki's claim in his *ABD* article on the gospel fragment (which he assumes is the *GPet*) reflects the views of Crossan and a few members of the Jesus seminar: "The *Gospel of Peter* was a narrative gospel of the synoptic type which circulated in the mid-first century under the authority of the name of Peter. An earlier form of the gospel probably served as one of the major sources for the canonical gospels."[40] Mirecki's *ABD* quote is the very reason this current study is needed. This book will show that the *Gospel of Peter* lacks verisimilitude with respect to the culture and history of first-century Palestine, but it does cohere with the second half of the second century in a setting outside the land of Palestine, whether specifically in Syria or more generally in the Eastern Empire.

Mirecki's first-century dating hardly represents mainstream scholarship. Ongoing work has called into question almost every aspect of Crossan's hypothesis. Scholars have pointed out, among other things, that the gospel fragment lacks historical and cultural verisimilitude, in that it does not reflect first-century Jewish Palestine. Nevertheless, the gospel fragment continues to be the focus of a resurgence of scholarly interest. The recent decade has seen a growing number of publications on the gospel fragment, principally from Germany and the United Kingdom.

37. Cf. H. Koester, "Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels," *HTR* 73 (1980): 105–30; *Ancient Christian Gospels Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 216–40; J. Denker, *Die theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Petrusevangeliums: Ein Beitrag zur frühgeschichte des Doketismus* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 23/36; Bern and Frankfurt: Lang, 1975); B. A. Johnson, "Empty Tomb Tradition in the Gospel of Peter" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School, 1965).

38. Cf. Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*; idem, "Passion Traditions," 49–70.

39. Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke*, 17.

40. P. A. Mirecki, "Peter, Gospel of," *ABD*, 5:278.

T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas' *Das Evangelium nach Petrus* has generated new interest in this old text.[41] Paul Foster's *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Commentary* should settle the question of dependency and provides several intriguing prospects for further critical inquiry. However, the most striking feature of this fragment, the embellished resurrection tradition and apologetic motifs, has not been the focus of scholarly discussion to date. There are some interesting questions that have yet to be explored.

One of the values of later extra-canonical texts is that they provide a vital window into the piety, practices, and beliefs of diverse groups of Christians in the second and third centuries and beyond.[42] In favour of a second-century date is the fragment's lessening of Roman responsibility for the death of Jesus, which reflects the Christian desire to mitigate the offence of Jesus' execution by imperial authority. Within the gospel fragment there seem to be theological concerns reflecting later developments of Christian thinking traceable to the second and third century. Correlations and parallels in other second-century works, such as the *Acts of Pilate* (*Gospel of Nicodemus*), are evident in such anti-Jewish and pro-Roman tendencies.

The purpose of this study is to explore the question of the development of resurrection traditions within the Akhmîm gospel fragment. In 1893 Henry Barclay Swete, one of the original Cambridge trio to handle the Akhmîm fragment, referred to the tradition as "this new and longest history of the passion."[43] More than half of the extant fragment features one of the longest resurrection narratives found in any gospel writing, featuring a walking and talking cross, conspiratorial cover-ups and pay-offs, graphic polymorphic anatomical changes, and increased attention upon the miraculous.[44] In terms of content and theological perspective, the gospel fragment has a greater resonance with

41. This scholarly interest has emphasized primarily the Christology of the *GPet* and its relationship to the canonical gospels. Newer topics that are addressed in this volume include discourse analysis of the text, codicological analysis, the type of Greek used by the author, the interplay between tradition and memory, the place of the text in relation to the other early Christian literature, reflection on the purpose of the text, and a study of the characterization of Pilate.

42. Paul Foster, *The Apocryphal Gospels: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 136.

43. H. B. Swete, *The Akhmîm Fragment of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1893), xiii.

44. The *Acts of Pilate* is another example of an expanded resurrection account in an extra-canonical gospel text.

the canonical gospels than when it is compared to the wider spectrum of extra-canonical writings. (For example, it does not present the theological and polemical challenges of its counterpart gospels of *Thomas* and *Mary.*) Its augmentations, anomalies, and apologetic motifs appear to defend perceived points of weakness or susceptibility within the second-century Church. The re-telling and re-casting of the resurrection appear to be a primary purpose of this gospel. The resurrection narrative found in the gospel fragment contains polemical, apologetic, pastoral, and evangelistic elements that invite a scholarly investigation.

In the following chapter I shall clarify the scope, purpose, and primary materials of my investigation. I shall also comment on my method and approach.

Chapter 3

Scope, Purpose, and Primary Materials: Assessing the Discovery

The scope of this investigation covers early Christian gospel traditions that continue to be produced, re-worked, and circulated into the second century. The textual subject matter delimits the parameters of the study. The research will be addressing extra-canonical resurrection traditions relating to Jesus Christ and the emergence of second-century apologetic motifs within the Akhmîm gospel fragment. The fragment's resurrection narrative (7:25–14:60) is the focus of the study.

My principal methodology will employ historical and tradition criticism. Using the tools of historical criticism, the study requires a close reading of the text of the Akhmîm gospel fragment (P.Cair. 10759), with comparison of the parallel canonical and extra-canonical accounts.[1] Using tradition criticism, this study will explore how a tradition is transmitted and develops within the wider context of a particular Christian community. I am especially interested in the development of theological ideas and apologetic. Christology, to be sure, is rooted in the writings of the New Testament, but it continues to develop into the second century and beyond. Some of these ideas are reflected, at least in embryonic form, in later extra-canonical writings, which give us an insight into how Jesus was thought of in local contexts in the early centuries of the Christian movement. As I will show, the Akhmîm gospel fragment develops Matthew's idea that the disciples could not have stolen the body of Jesus.[2] But this development is not limited to an apologetic effort to defend the

1. I thank the staff of Oxford University's Bodleian Library and Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for granting me regular access to the relevant papyri.

2. As seen in Matt 27:62–28:15, where we find the story of the guard at the tomb and the pay-off/cover up to spread the lie of the "disciples stealing the body." This tradition appears to be the pivotal point of departure for expansion for the author of *GPet*.

story of the resurrection—it also testifies to developing ideas concerning Christology. Tracing these developments in the gospel fragment will be the principal focus of this study.

The cultural matrix of the Akhmîm gospel fragment is relevant to the study. One seeks like with like in trying to build up a contextual picture. What is the most plausible setting and location for the document? The gospel fragment is one piece of data in wider second-century contextual matrices that will assist us in defining its purpose and place. My research will look for theological themes that recur or are prominent, and these may give an indication of the issues in early Christianity that the fragment's author felt needed to be addressed. Obviously this is not an exact science, but the more vectors and intersecting points reflective of second-century literature that can be identified will clarify a cultural matrix of which the Akhmîm fragment is likely to have been a part.

1. *P.Cair. 10759 and Oxyrhynchus Papyri 2949 and 4009*

The purpose of the study is not to produce another critical edition of the text of the gospel fragment. This work has been accomplished.[3] The study's critical approach will revolve around the resurrection account within the fragment to analyse its theology and corresponding relationships. Armitage Robinson is credited as the first to assign chapter numbers to the gospel fragment.[4] Adolf von Harnack is credited with assigning verse numbers to the text.[5] These divisions give us fourteen chapters and sixty verses. One should be aware when reading the fragment that the textual divisions are somewhat unusual. Later editors combined the two systems of notation. As a result, both chapter and verse numbers increase continuously throughout the text. The gospel fragment begins at 1:1 and concludes at 14:60.

3. For the latest critical edition(s), see Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas (eds.), *Das Petrusevangelium und die Petrusapokalypse: die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*.

4. For the first published edition, see J. A. Robinson and M. R. James, *The Gospel according to Peter, and the Revelation of Peter: Two Lectures on the Newly Recovered Fragments, Together with the Greek Texts* (London: C. J. Clay, 1892).

5. For the first published edition, see A. von Harnack, *Bruchstücke des Evangeliums und der Apokalypse des Petrus*, vol. 9 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893).

At the outset I need to say a few things about the Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragments 2949 and 4009.[6] Because neither of these fragments overlaps with the resurrection section of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, they play no role in my analysis of the resurrection narrative.[7] Nevertheless, they may have importance for addressing the questions of date and identification. Some have argued that P.Oxy. 2949 and P.Oxy. 4009 are late second-century/early third-century fragments of the *GPet* (mentioned by Bishop Serapion at the end of the second century). Papyrologists accept the proposed dates of the Oxyrhynchus fragments. The proposed *GPet* identification is another matter. There have also been attempts to identify other early papyrus fragments, as well as an ostracon, as portions of the *GPet*. These include the Fayyum Fragment, P.Egerton 2, and an ostracon containing an image of Peter (which looks very much like an illustrated stick figure) with the legend that reads, "Peter, the holy one, the evangelist."[8]

Dieter Lührmann believes that P.Oxy. 2949 and 4009 are fragments of the *GPet*. Because of some overlap with the Akhmîm gospel fragment Lührmann has also concluded that the gospel fragment is indeed an excerpt of the *GPet*. Accordingly, the Oxyrhynchus fragments, especially 2949, are seen as important witnesses. Paul Foster has replied to Lührmann urging "extreme caution," suggesting that the identification of the Oxyrhynchus fragments with either the *GPet* or the Akhmîm fragment is far from sure. In angry retort Lührmann suggested that Foster had never seen the two Oxhrynchus fragments:

6. R. Alan Coles, "2949. Fragments of an Apocryphal Gospel(?)," in G. M. Browne (ed.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 41 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1972), 15–16 + plate; Dieter Lührmann and P. J. Parsons, "4009. Gospel of Peter?," in P. J. Parsons et al. (eds.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 60 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1994), 1–7; Dieter Lührmann, "POx 2949: EvPt 3–5 in einer Handschrift des 2./3. Jahrhunderts," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 216–26; idem, "POx 4009: Ein neues Fragment des Petrusevangeliums?," *NovT* 35 (1993): 390–410.

7. During my residence in Oxford I had the opportunity to examine P.Oxy. 2949 and P.Oxy. 4009 at the Sackler Library, which is part of the greater Bodleian Oxford University Library system, connected with the Ashmolean Museum. A special thanks to Dr. Daniela Colomo and Dr. Dirk Obbink for their kind assistance.

8. For a convenient collection of these materials, see Dieter Lührmann, with Egbert Schlarb, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache* (MTS 59; Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 2000), 72–95.

> It remains dubious; so also his statement that he had studied POxy 2949 and 4009 in the Bodleian Library, because they have never been there. They are now in the Ashmolean Museum and the Sackler Library.[9]

To this remarkable assertion Foster responded: "Here the record must be set straight. I do not say that I consulted the fragments in the Bodleian, rather it is stated that they are 'held in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrology Collection of the Bodleian Library in Oxford.' "[10]

Evidently Lührmann misunderstood Foster. In any event, Foster's language is quite accurate and his visits to the Sackler Library, where he examined the papyri, are not in doubt. Foster points out that P.Oxy. 2949 and the Akhmîm gospel fragment hold in common only 44 out of 238 (possible) letters in the text or an overlap of 18.49 per cent.[11] Foster's monograph on the Akhmîm fragment provides an extended section analysing the current state of the question as it relates to other suggested early fragments. He concludes that due to the absence of any truly parallel text, "it is no longer possible to assert that the first text discovered in the Akhmîm codex is definitely a witness to an archetype dating to the second century."[12] Foster's statement is nuanced and has been misunderstood by scholars. He is not suggesting that the Akhmîm excerpt is not the *GPet* in an evolved form. Rather, he is stating that there is no evidence that the "seventh- to ninth-century" fragment was the original form of the *GPet*. We should not assume it without further ado. Appeals to the Fayyum Fragment, P.Egerton 2, and the van Haelst Nr. 741 Ostracon as possible witnesses to the *GPet* are not persuasive either. After all, none of these items overlaps with the extant text of the Akhmîm gospel fragment.

We do not know for a fact that the Akhmîm gospel fragment is from the *GPet*. Nevertheless, there are three or four factors that encourage us to think that it could be. First, Peter is the narrator of the gospel. In 7:26–27 the narrator says:

9. Dieter Lührmann, "Kann es wirklich keine frühe Handschrift des Petrusevangeliums geben? Corrigenda zu einem Aufsatz von Paul Foster," *NovT* 48 (2006): 381: "Dubios bleibt so auch seine Angabe, er habe POxy 2949 und 4009 in der Bodleian Library studiert, denn dort sind sie nie gewesen, sondern im Ashmolean Museum bzw. jetzt in der Sackler Library."

10. Paul Foster, "The Disputed Early Fragments of the So-called Gospel of Peter Once Again," *NovT* 49 (2007): 404.

11. Paul Foster, "Are there any Early Fragments of the So-Called Gospel of Peter?" *NTS* 52 (2005): 12.

12. Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 90.

> But I mourned with my fellows, and being wounded in my soul we hid ourselves. For we were being sought by them as malefactors and as wishing to set fire to the sanctuary. Because of all these things we were fasting, and we were sitting mourning and weeping night and day, until the sabbath.

At the very least this language seems to imply that the "I" and "we" are disciples. This is confirmed in 14:59, where the narrator explains: "But we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, were weeping and being grieved, and each one, being grieved on account of what took place, departed to his house." That the narrator is none other than Peter himself is made clear in the final extant verse: "But I, Simon Peter [ἐγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος], and Andrew my brother, having taken our nets, went out to sea. And Levi was with us, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord…" (14:60). In view of the identification of the first-person narrator with the apostle Peter it is quite probable that this work circulated under the name the *Gospel of Peter*. But whether it was the *GPet* condemned by Bishop Serapion is not certain.

A second point can also be made. The inclusion of the gospel fragment along with the *Apocalypse of Peter* supports the identification of the gospel fragment as a work known as the *Gospel of Peter*. But again I must underscore the point just made: We do not know that this fifth-century (or later) fragment of a *Gospel of Peter* found in Akhmîm is an excerpt of the second-century *GPet* that circulated in Syria, at least in Rhossos, that was condemned by Serapion, bishop of Antioch.[13]

A third factor that supports the identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *GPet* condemned by Serapion is that we know of no other gospel that circulated under the name of the apostle Peter.[14] This is a significant observation but it is little more than an argument from silence. The Akhmîm fragment may represent a second Petrine gospel.

Yet another point needs to be made. According to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.1–6), Bishop Serapion condemned the so-called *GPet* (τοῦ λεγομένου κατὰ Πέτρον Εὐαγγελίου) because those who first used it are those

13. See the entry on Serapion in F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1495. Serapion is known as the Bishop of Antioch (ca. 199–211 CE) and was said to have been one of the chief theologians of his day. This dating is significant because it assists us in knowing the first time the *GPet* is explicitly mentioned in historical annals. However, it should also be noted that the precise dating of Serapion's term in office varies by as much as a decade.

14. This point is made by Christian Maurer and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The Gospel of Peter," in W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; 2 vols.; Cambridge: James Clarke; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 1:217.

"whom we call Docetists [οὓς Δοκητὰς καλοῦμεν]" (6.12.6; cf. 3.3.2). Yet there really is nothing docetic about the Akhmîm gospel fragment. Armitage Robinson believed that the omission of "I thirst" pointed toward Docetism.[15] Others have wondered if the statement that Jesus remained silent, "as having no pain" (4:10), or the cry of dereliction, "My power, (my) power, you have abandoned me!" (5:19), reflect a docetic Christology. But these features are open to different and better explanations. The question has recently been revisited by Matti Myllykoski, who concludes:

> The Gospel of Peter is not docetic because the evangelist presupposes no capacity for suffering or analgesia for the "Lord." The "Lord" of the Akhmîm fragment is also not depicted as a martyr. He (Jesus) is rather a man, in whom a supernatural power is inherent and whose death on the cross is accompanied by supernatural signs.[16]

Myllykoski is correct. The whole point of the narrative is to heighten the power and greatness of Jesus, seen especially in his death and his dramatic resurrection. The author of the gospel fragment is not trying to downplay or deny the physicality of Jesus. There is nothing docetic about the gospel fragment. Accordingly, apart from the fact that the putative author of the fragment is Peter himself, we have no solid evidence that the Akhmîm excerpt is from the *GPet* known to us from patristic history.

It is not my intention here to question the identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *GPet*. My only point is to show how thin the evidence actually is. We have moved a long way from the confidence expressed in early scholarship, in which Swete could say, "There is no reason to doubt that the Akhmîm fragment was rightly assigned by M. Bouriant to the lost *Gospel of Peter*."[17]

In the present study the identification of the fragment with the *GPet* will be left open. In Chapter 7 I will provide evidence that the Akhmîm gospel fragment does indeed reflect the polemic and apologetic of the second

15. Robinson and James, *The Gospel according to Peter, and the Revelation of Peter*, 20.

16. Matti Myllykoski, "Die Kraft des Herrn: Erwägungen zur Christologie des Petrusevangeliums," in Kraus and Nicklas (eds.), *Das Evangelium nach Petrus*, 301–26, quotation 326: "Das EvPetr ist nicht doketisch, weil der Evangelist beim "Herrn" keine Leidensunfähigkeit oder Schmerzunempfindlichkeit voraussetzt. Der "Herr" des Akhmim-Fragments is aber auch nicht als Märtyrer gezeichnet. Er (Jesus) ist eher ein Mensch, dem eine übernatürliche Kraft innewohnt und dessen Tod am Kreuz von übernatürlichen Zeichen begleitet wird."

17. Swete, *The Akhmîm Fragment of the Apocryphal the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter*, xii.

century, a fact that supports a possible *GPet* identification. The heightened anti-Jewish element in the fragment coincides with anti-Jewish sentiments found in late second-century writers, such as Justin Martyr (a Palestinian), Origen (an Alexandrian), and Tertullian (a North African Latin-speaker). The author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment indulges in polemic against the Jewish people for his apologetic purposes. The author also advances an apologetic for the resurrection event that answers the scepticism and polemic of second-century pagan writers. The author's apologetic seems to represent a logical extension of the apologetic in the Gospel of Matthew and fits well within a second-century context.

2. *The Akhmîm Codex*

The physical features of the Akhmîm Codex itself are worthy of careful study. There are many aspects of this area of study that are vexatious, not least because of lost artefacts and archaeological data, not to mention the apparent loss of the codex itself.

a. *Codicology*

Stratigraphy and palaeography have been used to date the Akhmîm codex but proposed dates have varied widely. Not until one hundred years after the discovery of the codex would Guglielmo Cavallo and Herwig Maehler's groundbreaking palaeographical study, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period*, provide the parallels needed for something approaching a scholarly consensus.[18] The four texts contained in the codex are not written in the same handwriting style, thus necessitating separate studies of date and setting for each manuscript. The date of the codex itself has been debated. Prior to Cavallo and Maehler's study, Joseph van Haelst stated that the most widely held view, advanced by papyrologists, dated the compilation of the *GPet* sometime between the seventh and ninth centuries.[19] Of course, the date of the autograph is another matter.

In the *editio princeps*, Bouriant dated the codex based on the handwriting style and the location of the necropolis of Akhmîm:

18. Guglielmo Cavallo and Herwig Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period, A.D. 300–800* (London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987), no. 41b.

19. Joseph van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1976), 597–98.

> This manuscript is made up of 33 leaves that are 15 centimetres in length and 12 centimetres in width, and is not paginated. The leaves are bound with a cardboard binding, covered with leather that has been blackened with age. There is no date or any other indication that might help us to establish even the approximate date of the leaves' transcription(s). However, the particularities that we find in the writing and in the language itself put us on the right track, showing that the manuscript was not written before the eighth century nor after the twelfth century. This probability almost becomes a certainty if we examine the location of the necropolis of Akhmîm where it was found.[20]

One of the excerpts and collated documents contained in P.Cairo 10759 is our gospel fragment. Interred for over a millennium prior to discovery, the composite parchment (vellum) codex of 33 unnumbered leaves (66 pages) is remarkably well preserved, measuring ca. 15 × 12cm. or ca. 6 × 4.5in. The iconography of the codex can serve as a further datum for dating the codex. The recto of the first leaf is decorative, bearing a Coptic cross supported by an A and Ω. The gospel fragment begins on page 2 under a smaller cross and concludes on page 10 (a total of 154 lines of gospel text), where three more crosses stand above a knot-working interlace graphic very similar to the Celtic designs. Examination of the codex revealed that it contained a nine-page excerpt of a gospel written in the first person from the perspective of Jesus' most famous disciple, Peter.

The presence of the surrounding ornamentation indicates that the scribe was copying his gospel text from an already fragmented text since space was available to continue the transmission. The text is a fragmentary gospel narrative, written entirely in Greek cursive (miniscule), containing significant portions of a passion story, a miraculous epiphany, an empty tomb, and one of the longest resurrection narratives from late antiquity. Pages 11 and 12 are blank; pages 13 through 19 contain a fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter* (bound upside down, so the text begins on page 19 and ends on page 13); page 20 is blank; pages 21 through 66 contain a portion of the *Book of Enoch*; a vellum leaf from another manuscript inserted into the binding on the back cover contains part of the *Martyrdom*

20. Bouriant, *Fragments du texte grec*, 93: "Ce dernier manuscrit, comprenant trente-trois feuillets hauts de quinze centi-mètres et larges de douze, ne porte aucune pagination. Les feuillets sont renfermés dans une reliure de carton recouvert de cuir noirci par le temps. Nulle date, nulle indication qui puisse nous aider à établir l'époque même approximative où ils ont été transcrits. Seules, les particularités qu'on relève dans l'écriture ou dans la langue elle-même, peuvent nous mettre sur la voie, et montrent que le manus-crit n'est pas antérieur au vme siècle ni postérieur au xiie. Cette probabilité devient presque une certitude, si on examine l'emplacement de la nécropole d'Akhmîm où il a été retrouvé."

of St. Julian of Anazarbus.[21] Bouriant claimed the last leaf of the codex was glued to the inside of the cover in the style of a Greek biblical majuscule:

> Finally, a leaf covered with beautiful uncial writing is found on the inside flyleaf of the manuscript's binding, which must have belonged to a book containing the deeds/acts of Saint Julian.[22]

The Akhmîm Codex is classified as P.Cair. 10759. On the Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB) it is described as follows: "Alexandria, Bibliotheca Alexandrina (exhibited) [10759] formerly Cairo, Egyptian Museum CG 10759 (fol. 1–33)."[23] The LDAB has followed Cavalla and Maehler, dating the Akhmîm Codex 500–699 CE.[24]

Table 1. *The Contents of the Akhmîm Codex*

Page	*Contents*
Inside Front Cover	Blank
1	Pious Illustrations: Crosses; A and Θ
2–10	*Gospel of Peter*
11–12	Blank,
13–19	*Apocalypse of Peter* (pages stitched the wrong way round and upside down, so they must be read in the order 19-13)
20	Blank
21–66	Two fragments from *1 Enoch*
Inside Back Cover	*Martyrdom of St. Julian of Anazarbus*[25]

21. Andrew E. Bernhard, *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007), 51. Julian of Anazarbus (also known as Julian of Antioch or Julian of Tarsus) was martyred under Diocletian sometime between 305 and 311. His martyrdom became the stuff of legend and hagiography.

22. Bouriant, *Editio Princeps*, 147: "Enfin, sur la garde intérieure de la reliure du manuscrit, se trouve collé un feuillet couvert d'une belle écriture en onciale et qui a dû appartenir a un livre renfermant les actes de saint Julien."

23. In 2011 the LDAB updated the accession description with the words "formerly Cairo." The whereabouts of the Akhmîm codex are unknown.

24. www.trismegistos.org/ldab/text.php?tm=59976 (accessed 29 January 2012).

25. I thank my UK Ph.D. supervisor, Professor Paul Foster, for his assistance in constructing this table for my book. See also Paul Foster, "The Gospel of Peter," *Expository Times* 118 (April 2007): 318–25, here 319.

b. *Palaeography*

The dating of the codex has been highly contested, with suggested dates ranging from the fourth/fifth[26] century through late fifth,[27] fifth/sixth,[28] and sixth century[29] to the eighth/twelfth century.[30] Cavalla and Maehler carefully analysed the letter-forms with corresponding parallels and stated, "All this points, with little margin of error, to a date for the Cairo codex near the end of the vi century."[31] They point out that the triangular Δ (δέλτα) is in a slanting position "which is not attested before the late v century and does not become frequent until the vi century."[32] Van Minnen posits that, "the scribe knew what he was doing, because as we have seen, he calculated the length of the text beforehand." Foster has stated that the scribal tendencies, handwriting, and artistic decorations indicate the same scribe is at work in the first two collated documents of the Akhmîm Codex.[33]

Foster has also argued that the apparent lack of quality in the handwriting and the substandard compilation of the codex, lead to the suspicion that the text was not produced in a scriptorium. This is certainly plausible. However, Van Minnen does not share Foster's view, stating: "It is a carefully written documentary hand."[34] Furthermore, according to Tito Orlandi, who has done extensive work on the White Monastery at Akhmîm, which was founded around the middle of the fourth century, "We can be reasonably sure that the monastery had a library from the beginning, and possibly also a scriptorium."[35] Perhaps influences from

26. Carl Wessely (ed.), *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde*, vols. 1–2 (Leipzig: E. Avenarius, 1901–1902; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert Verlag, 1965).

27. H. A. Sanders, *The New Testament Manuscripts in the Freer Collection* (London: Macmillan, 1918), 137–38.

28. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *Greek Papyri, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, Nos. 10001–10869 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903).

29. E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (ed. P. J. Parsons; 2d ed. rev. and enl.; London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1987).

30. For the traditional dating of the *editio princeps*, see ibid., 147.

31. Cavallo and Maehler, *Greek Bookhands*, no. 41 (p. 90, and not p. 75, as given in some publications).

32. Ibid.

33. Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 56.

34. Peter Van Minnen, "The Greek Apocalypse of Peter," in J. N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz (eds.), *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 7; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 20.

35. Tito Orlandi, "The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe," in Egberts, Muhs, and van der Vliet (eds.), *Perspectives on Panopolis*, 211.

the White Monastery can inform the discussion of the codex found in the grave at Akhmîm. Orlandi reports that the library and scriptorium were still functioning from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, representing "by far the largest Coptic library ever known, and probably contained copies of most of the ecclesiastical works existing in the Coptic (Sahidic) language."[36] This connection has been under-studied and under-developed in previous scholarship concerned with the Akhmîm gospel fragment. Upon examination, P.Cair. 10759 does not show a consistently careful scribal hand. Indeed, the handwriting deteriorates through the 154 lines of text. However, the presence of an education center in the form of a monastery, a library, and scriptorium should not be overlooked.[37] We can infer that the codex was very meaningful to its interred possessor, but we cannot conclude the skeletal remains belonged to one of the scribes, as Foster has suggested.[38] Many documents of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries were written by professional scribes, such as notaries. In contrast to Foster, Van Minnen believes the codex was produced in a scriptorium:

> In late antiquity left-overs of several manuscripts were often put together in a bundle to create a new codex, or selections from various texts were made to create a composite manuscript. Both phenomena seem to be at work in the Akhmîm codex.[39]

Armando Petrucci has argued that manuscripts in late antiquity were often put together in a bundle to create a new codex, or selections from various texts were made to create a composite manuscript.[40] Furthermore, we have no way of knowing if the Greek text of P.Cair. 10759 reflects the original, or autographic, form. The question still remains as to why these texts were collated in the fashion we find them, presumably sometime after the fifth century (or later). Van Minnen postulates, "There may be a link with the great upheavals in Egypt at the time, notably the Arab conquest, but I do not want to speculate on this."[41]

36. Ibid., 213.

37. Arthur J. Dewey, "'Time to Murder and Create': Visions and Revisions in the Gospel of Peter," *Semeia* 49 (1990): 153–55.

38. Paul Foster, "The Gospel of Peter," in P. Foster (ed.), *The Non-Canonical Gospels* (London: T&T Clark International, 2008), 31.

39. Van Minnen, "Akhmîm Gospel," 58.

40. Armando Petrucci, "Dal libro unitario al libro miscellaneo," in Andrea Giardina (ed.), *Società romana e impero tardoantico*. Vol. 4, *Tradizione dei classici, transformazioni della cultura* (Rome: Laterza, 1986), 173–87, as cited by Van Minnen, "Apocalyspe," 26. Petrucci's discussion focuses on Latin mss.

41. Ibid.

The Akhmîm gospel fragment exhibits a scribal characteristic known by the Latin term *nomina sacra*, "sacred names" (*nomen sacrum*, singular).[42] Larry Hurtado believes that the use of *nomina sacra* is a Christian innovation:

> Granted, the practice was, in all likelihood, indebted in some sense to the varied ways that Jewish scribes tried to mark off the divine name, but the particular scribal techniques differ. For instance, the Christian innovation appears to include the standardized use of the supralinear stroke to mark off the words treated as *nomina sacra*, and the characteristic use of contracted abbreviations of these words seem likewise to be a distinctively Christian scribal convention.[43]

The scribal tendency to shorten names or words thought to be sacred, adding a supralinear stroke, arose in the second century of the church. *Nomina sacra* are attested in Christian mss. in three different forms: (1) by listing only the first and last letter; (2) by writing the first two and the last letters; (3) by writing the first and last syllables. By the Byzantine era, some fifteen *nomina sacra* in their nominative and genitive forms were common.[44] This is another important indicator when considering the dating of P. Cair. 10759. Foster has stated that the usage of the *nomina sacra* in P.Cair. 10759 should be dated to a period when all fifteen of the most common *nomina sacra* were demonstrably widespread. In the Akhmîm gospel fragment we find κύριος in the nominative, genitive, and accusative ($\overline{\text{κς}}$, $\overline{\text{κυ}}$, and $\overline{\text{κν}}$); θεοῦ only in the genitive ($\overline{\text{θυ}}$); and, uniquely, ἀνθρώπων ($\overline{\text{ανων}}$) in the genitive in reference to all humanity, and in the nominative in reference to an angel ($\overline{\text{ανος}}$) who entered the empty tomb.

42. Ludwig Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der Christlichen Kürzung* (Munich: Beck, 1907).

43. Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 120. *Nomina sacra* are found in the oldest Greek manuscripts of the writings of the New Testament (e.g., $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, among others; all date from about 200 to 240). See also Larry Hurtado, "The Origin of the Nomina Sacra: A Proposal," *JBL* 117 (1998): 655–73. One may also wish to consult Jim Wicker, "Pre-Constantinian 'nomina sacra' in a Mosaic and Church Graffiti," *SWJT* 52 (2009): 52–72; and Jane Heath, "*Nomina sacra* and *sacra memoria* before the Monastic Age," *JTS* 61 (2010): 516–49. For Jewish antecedents, one will want to consult Kristin de Troyer, "The Pronunciation of the Names of God: With Some Notes Regarding *nomina sacra*," in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Philipp Stoelger (eds.), *Gott nennen: Gottes Name und Gott als Name* (Religion in Philosophy and Theology 35; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 143–72.

44. Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Paleography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 36.

Another indication of the lateness of the gospel fragment is the pious and consistent reference to Jesus as ὁ κύριος (eleven of the thirteen instances with the *nomina sacra*).

c. *The limitations of the primary data*

Ultimately, all that we have relating to the Akhmîm gospel fragment is the extant text. We do not have access to the community or to the author behind the text. Thus, I will enter into the world that the text itself provides us, exploring what light it can shed and at the same time exploring the light shed on it through comparative and historical study. I am fully aware of the limitations the data present.

The scholar cannot assume that the Akhmîm gospel fragment constitutes a comprehensive and thorough account of the author's understanding and theology of resurrection for the simple reason that the extant text is only an excerpt. However, the extant fragment presents readers with an important glimpse of that special moment of Jesus' resurrection, which goes well beyond anything found in the older canonical gospels. The extant text abruptly ends mid-sentence at 14:60. This final verse has set the scene for a post-resurrection incident that is about to take place beside some unspecified area. Among the canonical gospels, only in John do we have a post-resurrection scene that takes place on the shores of a body of water (John 21:1–23). Perhaps it is a story like this that the Akhmîm fragment was about to narrate:

> ἐγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος καὶ Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφός μου λαβόντες ἡμῶν τὰ λίνα ἀπήλθαμεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἦν σὺν ἡμῖν Λευείς ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου ὃν κῦ ...
>
> But I, Simon Peter, and Andrew my brother, taking our nets went to the sea, and there was with us Levi the brother of Alphaeus, whom the Lord… (Akhmîm fragment 14:60)

> Μετὰ ταῦτα ἐφανέρωσεν ἑαυτὸν πάλιν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβεριάδος· ἐφανέρωσεν δὲ οὕτως...λέγει αὐτοῖς Σίμων Πέτρος· ὑπάγω ἁλιεύειν. λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· ἐρχόμεθα καὶ ἡμεῖς σὺν σοί.
>
> After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way…Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." (John 21:1, 3a)

Léon Vaganay argued that the author of the Akhmîm fragment knew John's Gospel.[45] Perhaps. But it is risky to assume that the Akhmîm

45. Léon Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre* (2d ed.; Paris: Gabalda, 1930), 65.

narrative followed the Johannine narrative. What we can infer about the author's understanding of the resurrection can only be determined from the extant text, not from assumptions about what the text might have gone on to narrate. After all, there are several unexpected details in the Akhmîm gospel narrative.

Notwithstanding the limitations that we face, the Akhmîm gospel fragment does provide us with the earliest written account known, in which the actual event of the resurrection is narrated. The author took care that his audience would be left with no doubt that the revivified and stunningly transformed body of Jesus had indeed exited the tomb—in full view of the very authorities that had condemned him to the cross. The author wanted his readers to know that here is a vindicated man, supernaturally empowered and recognized by heaven itself.

d. *The Mystery of the Missing Manuscript*

Assessing the current whereabouts of P.Cair. 10759 has been complicated since the initial discovery of the codex. Some scholars complained that the *editio princeps* of the newly discovered gospel fragment did not appear until five or six years after discovery.[46] Foster argues that this complaint is without merit.[47] He is quite correct, for in some cases publication follows discovery by several decades.

As stated in an earlier section, the Akhmîm codex has been catalogued under more than one accession number. Early scholars referred to the codex as Codex Panopolitanus (or Cairo Codex 1075). Vaganay refers to the codex in the same way as other early descriptions (Gizeh catalogue number 1323): "Il est parfois appelé manuscrit de Gizeh, le nom de la bibliothèque où il est deposé" ("It is sometimes called Manuscript of Gizeh, the name of the library where it is deposited").[48] Foster's recent commentary on the *GPet* catalogues numerous efforts by scholars from around the world, who have attempted to locate the now missing *GPet*.[49] Suggestions have also been made that the Akhmîm Codex itself, or perhaps a few leaves, was at one time on display in Alexandria. Representatives of the Alexandria library denied this claim. Johannes van Oort's visit to Egypt in June 2010 bore no fruit. In recent e-mail correspondence with Tobias Nicklas, I was told that there was "no news" as to the whereabouts

46. See the complaint in Harris, *A Popular Account of the Newly Recovered Gospel of St Peter*, 17–18.

47. Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 4–7.

48. Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 14.

49. Foster, *Gospel of Peter: Commentary*, 1.

of the codex.[50] At least we are fortunate enough to have a set of excellent photographs of the text taken by Adam Bülow-Jacobsen around 1981. They are easily accessible online.[51]

3. *Conclusion*

The Akhmîm fragment is classified as a narrative gospel similar to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Curiously only one utterance—the words of abandonment at 5:19—is attributed to Jesus in the extant version of the Akhmîm fragment. Of course, the full contents of the Akhmîm gospel are not known. As preserved in P.Cair. 10759, the passion narrative begins abruptly in mid-sentence with the trial of Jesus before Pilate and breaks off mid-sentence at what appears to be the beginning of a resurrection appearance that is reminiscent of John 21, where Jesus encounters his disciples on the Sea of Tiberias. Interpretation of the fragment must focus on what has been discovered and not on what we imagine the whole document might have been.

50. Private e-mail correspondence of 23 February 2011.

51. The photographs are also available on the following website: http://ipap.csad.ox.ac.uk/GP/GP.html (accessed 27 February 2011).

Chapter 4

POST-MORTEM BELIEFS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: THE BEGINNINGS OF RESURRECTION HOPE

"If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14) is a question that receives no clear answer in the Hebrew Bible.[1] In this ancient corpus there is little, perhaps no, articulation of resurrection. Indeed, Job sees the grave as a hiding place from God's anger. The normal expectation in the Hebrew Scriptures was that of being blessed by God in this life for obedience, with no expectation of life to follow. Perhaps one of the most confounding penumbrae of the Hebrew Bible is the question of a post-mortem existence.

While personal resurrection within the Hebrew Bible is a much later development, there are forms and hints of afterlife beliefs and themes here and there. These generative beginnings in the Hebrew Bible are the antecedents of resurrection ideas that come to expression in late Second Temple Judaism. Through tracing the development of afterlife beliefs one sees more clearly the way Jewish interpreters of the second and third century BCE gave new expression to their traditions. At this stage it is helpful to consider relevant texts in the Hebrew corpus that attest Israelite beliefs concerning the post-mortem state.[2]

1. Perhaps it is only fitting that such an intriguing verse as Job 14:14 is encumbered with exegetical and literary problems. Is it in its proper context? Perhaps it belongs after v. 19? Have we translated it properly? On these and other questions, see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC 17; Dallas: Word, 1989), 331–32.

2. For recent overviews, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in the Ancient Near East," in Longenecker (ed.), *Life in the Face of Death*, 21–50; Bryan, *Resurrection of the Messiah*, 9–18. For studies that take into account the larger context of the ancient Near East, see Jan Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (NumSup 5; Leiden: Brill, 1960); Edmund F. Sutcliffe, *The Old Testament and the Future Life* (London: Barnes, Oates & Washburn, 1964); Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (BibOr 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); Theodore J. Lewis,

It is necessary to review the contribution that the Hebrew Bible has made, not simply because it constitutes the starting place for the history of the resurrection idea, but because at least one interpreter of the Akhmîm gospel fragment thinks the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection largely arose from interpretation of certain themes and passages of the Hebrew Bible, in the sense of "prophecy historicized."[3] Although this approach has been vigorously challenged,[4] there is no denying that the Hebrew Bible has in some sense influenced the gospel accounts of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The contribution of the Hebrew Bible must be examined in the context of the present study.

1. *Anomalous Encounters with the Dead*

The Hebrew Bible does contain a number of stories and traditions that in one way or another assume some form of post-mortem existence. Its contribution to resurrection ideas is minimal. Nevertheless, it is worth a quick overview.

a. *Resuscitations, Translations, and the* Song of Hannah

A number of passages in the Hebrew Bible envisage post-mortem existence in a variety of ways. Three resuscitations are recorded in 1–2 Kings: (1) in 1 Kgs 17:17–27 Elijah raises the widow's son; (2) in 2 Kgs 4:18–37 Elisha raises the Shunammite woman's son; and (3) in 2 Kgs 13:20–21 an unnamed man being buried in the grave of Elisha is revived after touching the prophet's bones. The three men mentioned in these passages were raised from the dead by divine intervention. However, there

Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit (HSM 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (FAT 11; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994).

3. See J. D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995). Crossan argues that the Passion story grew out of Old Testament prophecy (see esp. pp. 1–38) and that the *GPet* was the principal source on which the New Testament gospels relied. Some of the passages in the Hebrew Bible to which Crossan appeals are the very passages that I discuss in the present chapter. On Hos 6:2, see Crossan, *Cross that Spoke*, 93, 270 (and *Who Killed Jesus?* 191); on Wis 2–3, see *Cross that Spoke*, 331; on Ezek 37:7, see p. 393.

4. Crossan's hypothesis has been criticized in Craig A. Evans, "The Passion of Jesus: History Remembered or Prophecy Historicized?," *BBR* 6 (1996): 159–65; Quarles, "The Gospel of Peter," esp. 107–9.

is no indication in the text that they were brought back to an immortal, everlasting life; they would die again at some future point. Resuscitation is quite different from the later Jewish and early Christian notion of resurrection. Robert Martin-Achard comments on the meaning of these three passages from the books of Kings:

> …they served to authenticate the prophetic ministry and to make evident YHWH's power over death: in this way, they confirmed the declarations that one can read in Deut 32:39 and 1 Sam 2:6 about the uncontested sovereignty of the God of Israel (and not of Baal) over the fate of human beings. In the texts from Kings, nowhere is there any mention of a definitive victory over death… (1 Kgs 17:21–22; 2 Kgs 4:34–35)[5]

Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:9–11) are translated or ascend into heaven without seeing death. The obscurity of these passages, along with the lack of any further theological corroboration from that time, delimits any further doctrinal significance being added to these events. Paul Foster has commented that translation from this life to another realm is an exception, not applicable to people in general, and resuscitation implies no more than a temporary release from the inevitable.[6]

The *Song of Hannah* states that "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam 2:6), but resurrection should not be inferred based on this hymn of worship as seen in its original context. The imagery used of "being raised up" confirmed Hannah's answer to her prayer by bearing a son out of her once barren (Sheol-like) womb. According to Martin-Achard, The *Song of Hannah* only indicates Yahweh's power to intervene victoriously, and it should not be seen as a foreshadowing of resurrection.[7]

5. Robert Martin-Achard, "Resurrection (OT)," *ABD*, 5:681.
6. Foster, "The Hebrew Bible," 7–8.
7. Robert Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament* (trans. John P. Smith; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1960), 57. French original: *De la mort à la Résurrection, d'après l'Ancien Testament* (Bibliothèque théologique; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1956). Nevertheless, note the comment in H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 30: "A specific faith in the resurrection from the dead lies more on the periphery and at the conclusion of the OT, but its theological starting-point is without doubt the consciousness of the unconditional might of Yahweh."

b. *The Witch of Endor*

Surprisingly, a passage not often discussed is the strange encounter between Saul and the witch (אוב) of Endor in 1 Sam 28:1–25.[8] Modern versions have translated אוב ("witch") in a variety of ways, including "medium," "ghost," "spirit," "spirit of the dead," "necromancer," and "wizard." The pair אוב ("medium") and ידעני ("necromancer") often appear together (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 9; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chr 33:6; Isa 8:19; 19:3) in the Hebrew Bible. The word ידעני derives from the root "to know" (ידע) with the implication of gaining special insight through communication from the dead.[9] The LXX renders אוב as ἐγγαστρίμυθον, which literally means "in the belly" or "(sourced) in the belly." ἐγγαστρίμυθον is defined as "ventriloquists, and correctly because ventriloquists amongst the ancients, commonly abused this art of inward speaking for magical purposes."[10] Thus, a medium (אוב) was someone who called up the spirit of the deceased and communicated for him.

After eliminating nearly all the mediums from Israel, King Saul himself in disguise visited a necromancer (1 Sam 28:7–20). In retelling the story, the Chronicler explicitly states that Saul died from consulting the dead rather than consulting God (1 Chr 10:13–14). This passage offers a different perspective from the other Hebrew Bible passages because it appears that based on her shock at seeing an apparition of Samuel the witch did not expect to succeed in making contact with the dead. In the older version of the story, Samuel speaks to Saul directly (i.e. without need of the medium) pronouncing his judgment (1 Sam 28:15).[11] This passage simultaneously mocks the popular belief in mediums (which

8. En-dor was a town on the northern edge of the Jezreel valley originally allotted to the tribe of Manasseh (Josh 17:11) but occupied by the Canaanites (Josh 17:12). On the eve of his final battle with the Philistines, Saul travelled in disguise to En-dor (which would have been behind enemy lines) to consult a medium (1 Sam 28:7). Ps 83:10 also mentions En-dor as a site in which Israel gained a victory over her enemies; although it is unclear exactly which enemy was defeated there (i.e. whether it was Midian, Siserah, or Jabin).

9. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:366–68 (no. 848).

10. Wilhelm F. Gesenius and S. P. Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (London: Bagster, 1857), *ad loc*.

11. Note that Samuel is identifiable, corporeal, aware, and certainly not extinct. This speaks to some kind of belief in "on-going" afterlife experience. For brief but interesting comments on what the ancients believed with respect to this strange story, see Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 220–21.

suggests that some people in Israel thought they had powers and that the dead could be contacted) and also seems to imply some sort of continuity of being for Samuel. However, Samuel is annoyed at being disturbed and aroused from a state of rest.[12] This passage is an exception to the general rule presented in the Hebrew Bible; generalizing from it is not advised.[13]

2. *The Earliest Discernible Afterlife Beliefs in the Hebrew Bible*

In the Hebrew Bible, death was seen as the end. Sheol was the final resting-place for the righteous and unrighteous alike. Evidence of a belief in resurrection in the Hebrew Bible is scarce and often ambiguous. In Jewish burial traditions, death was not celebrated (in the sense of rituals for the dead),[14] as the threefold division of the *Tanak* expresses: (1) "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19—*The Torah*); (2) "For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope in your faithfulness" (Isa 38:18—*Nevi'im*); (3) "when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust" (Ps 104:29—*Ketuvim*). It is unlikely that resurrection belief would be arrived at by contemplation of the Hebrew Scriptures.[15] Martin-Achard summarizes the prevailing belief among pre-exilic Judaism, stating that, "When one reads the OT, one fact is striking: that Israel is attached to life—to this life—and in no way dreams of a marvellous hereafter."[16] Therefore, living-for-today appears to be the perspective of pre-exilic life and culture within Israel.

a. *Anthropological Belief in the Inseparability of the Body and Soul*

Over the centuries, the anthropological conceptions of the *Torah* dominated Israel's understanding of the afterlife. The passage in Gen 2:7–8 taught a holistic view of the human being consisting of body and soul, which were

12. Samuel's language is reminiscent of the language used in reference to tomb violation. In seeking counsel from the dead Samuel, Saul is violating the laws of sepulture, as well as Yahweh's prohibition against consulting mediums.

13. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 219–21; R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Dallas: Word, 1983), 272–73.

14. Craig A. Evans, "Jewish Burial Traditions and the Resurrection of Jesus," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 233–48.

15. C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (SBT 2.12; London: SCM Press, 1970), 14.

16. Martin-Achard, "Resurrection (OT)," 5:680.

inseparable in life. The writings that make up the *Ketuvim* emphasize that the God who gave breath would one day take it back (Ps 4:29–30; Qoh 12:7). The body was always in a process of decay and would eventually become inanimate (Gen 3:19; Ps 90:3). As I will argue, Sheol showed no expectation of divine intervention or eternal sanctuary. Hence we can discern a significant tension in understanding the nature of resurrection tradition in Judeo-Christian thought. For Israel, there could be no victory over death without a transformed and renewed soul-body. Belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead emerges from the early anthropological beliefs of the Israelites, although it is not attested until much later.[17]

b. *Reward and Reputation*

The faithful man is promised posterity (Gen 12:1–3; 15:4; Num 6:22–27). The Hebrew Bible attests repeatedly to an afterlife belief of living *in the memory* as celebrated in the family. That the family is intrinsically tied to the Israelite community and national renewal is emphasized. Thus, a national eschatological faith, filial generation blessing, and a favoured progeny were the desire of every faithful believer as death drew near. Foster has observed:

> Within the patriarchal narratives, future hope revolves around the twin aspirations of a long life and plentiful offspring to propagate the family line. Thus, the promised blessing given to Abraham for covenant fidelity is that "you shall go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age" (Gen 15.15). This is also coupled with the assurance that his future generations will be blessed with divine provision: "to your descendants I will give this land" (Gen 15:18).[18]

The promises of God, for Israel, related to and found fulfilment in this life. Segal calls these rewards "evanescent."[19] The majority of the Hebrew Bible promises blessing to the righteous and punishment of evil-doers as extant realities (Prov 3:5–8; 10:2, 22–25; 13:6–9, 21; Isa 10:1–4, 18–31; Hos 6:1–6; Mic 2:1–13). The promises of fellowship with God were seen as being received in this life and "to a thousand generations after" (Exod 37:7; Deut 5:9–10; Jer 32:18). For the faithful Israelite, one's memory would live on in each succeeding generation through the burial rites

17. Ibid., 5:683.

18. Foster, "The Hebrew Bible," 4–5.

19. Alan F. Segal, "Life after Death: The Social Sources," in S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (eds.), *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 95.

celebrated in the midst of Israel.[20] A passage from the *Ketuvim* attests that, "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Qoh 7:1) and that names could live on in the success of the nation and the family.

Therefore, the inhabitation of the land and family burial rites were key concepts in Hebrew Bible afterlife beliefs. These concepts reach back to the Patriarchs. When Sarah died, Abraham purchased a proper family burial site from Ephron the Hittite (Gen 23:20), then mourned her for a period of time (Gen 23:2). The burial of her body was "out of my (Abraham's) sight" (Gen 23:4). Abraham indicates no expectation of being reunited with Sarah again. Abraham himself dies, having obtained the blessing of the Lord, and is buried at the same burial site at a "ripe age" (Gen 25:8) and is "gathered to his people" (Gen 25:8). Abraham's life and death became a model for succeeding generations. His son Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob share in this honour. Their honour is seen in the qualification often attached to mention of Yahweh, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (cf. Exod 3:6). Their names may have continued on, but their deaths were nevertheless a final reality. The expectation in the Hebrew Scriptures is that the dead remain dead, though the Lord in this life has blessed them.

c. *Passages Dealing with the Destination of Departed Spirits*

The Hebrew Bible does not explicitly attest the extinction or annihilation of human beings at death. The primary manner of describing the post-mortem state was to depict the deceased as being in Sheol. The innovation of resurrection belief cannot correctly be understood in late Second Temple Judaism without taking into account the grim and ambiguous description of Sheol found in the earliest Scriptures. According to the Hebrew Bible, Sheol was a place where everyone expected to arrive upon death (Ps 89:48). The righteous (Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Job 14:13; Ps 16:10) and unrighteous (Num 16:30, 33; Job 24:19; Pss 9:17; 49:14; and Ezek 32:21) alike expected Sheol.

The Hebrew word שאול (*sheol*) is of unknown origin.[21] The word does not occur outside of the Hebrew Scriptures, except once in the Jewish Elephantine papyri, where it means "grave."[22] The word obviously refers in some way to the abode of the dead. Sheol can be defined as the

20. Martin-Achard, "Resurrection (OT)," 5:683.

21. See R. L. Thomas (ed.)*, New American Standard Hebrew–Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries* (updated ed.; Anaheim: Foundation Publications, 1998), *ad loc*.

22. A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), no. 71:15.

underworld (a place to which people descend at death) and is used this way approximately 66 times in the MT.[23] Sheol is described as having "gates" by which one enters and "bars" which keep one in (Job 17:16; Isa 38:10). Such allegorical language conveys the idea that Sheol is a realm from which no escape is possible.

Sheol has negative cognates when translated into Greek as Ἀβαδδών (Abaddon or "Destroyer"; the Hebrew name of a demon transliterated into Greek), which is correlative with Ἀπολλύων ("destroyer"). In the LXX, Sheol was translated as "Hades" (ᾅδης) some 71 times.[24] The classical Greeks used Hades as the name for their underworld and its god. The Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE) described ᾅδης as an elaborately organized and guarded realm where the good were rewarded in the Elysian Fields and the evil were punished. Hades appears some 111 times in the LXX.[25] In later Judaism ᾅδης (translating the Hebrew שׁאול) is used metaphorically to speak of the restoration of Israel (cf. Isa 26:19).[26] The New Testament authors understood the conventional meaning and usage of Hades, as opposed to Gehenna or Tartarus. In the New Testament ᾅδης occurs ten times, four times in Revelation and twice each in Matthew, Luke, and Acts. In each case ᾅδης, as in the LXX, renders Hebrew שׁאול, the realm of the dead.[27]

Qoheleth describes the grim realities of Sheol in Qoh 9:3–10: "…but the dead know nothing, and they have no reward, for the memory of them is forgotten" (9:5). With more than a touch of cynicism the Preacher declares: "Forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun" (9:6). Therefore, he advises: "Enjoy your life…for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going…" (9:9–10).[28] Segal believes that Qoheleth, influenced by Greek and Stoic thought regarding Hades, has not been influenced by the

23. *Hebrew–Aramaic Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*, Accordance Bible Software: "שׁאול."

24. "Hades, the world of the dead; death; perhaps hell, the place of final punishment." See BAG, *ad loc*.

25. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (2d ed.; Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 382.

26. J. Jeremias, "ᾅδης," *TDNT* 1:164.

27. "ᾅδης," *EDNT* 1:30.

28. See the comments in James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 159–63; Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (WBC 23A; Dallas: Word, 1992), 91–95.

Platonic notion of the immortality of the soul.[29] Accordingly, the nature of Sheol remains vague, offering little hope. This rather primitive conception of the afterlife changes as the late Second Temple period emerged.

(1) *Late Wisdom Tradition*

The views of Job and Qoheleth are given voice by later wisdom traditions, such as the Wisdom of Yeshua ben Sira. The great sage ben Sira penned his work a century or two before the turn of the era, at a time when explicit resurrection theology was beginning to emerge. Nevertheless, his marvellous collection of proverbs and advice does not, as well shall see, go beyond the eschatology of the older writings of the Hebrew Bible.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira was to signal the end of an era, not its continuation. The pseudepigraphal Wisdom of Solomon, penned about 150 years after ben Sira's time, tells a new story, one that is more fully in keeping with the challenges and calamities of the latter part of the intertestamental period. With ben Sira we witness the end of the old Hebrew concept of post-mortem existence in terms at best of slumbering with one's ancestors, but with the Wisdom of Solomon we see a transformed wisdom tradition that has much to say about theodicy worked out in the afterlife.

(2) *Wisdom of Yeshua ben Sira*

The sage Yeshua ben Sira (or Jesus, son of Sirach) composed in Hebrew his proverbs sometime around the year 180 BCE. In the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes (132 BCE) his grandson translated the work into Greek (as he explains in a prologue he added to the text). Ben Sira has given us 51 beautiful chapters of wisdom that bridge the end of the older understanding of wisdom and the beginning of the new ideas that lie just around the corner, ideas that often will express themselves in apocalyptic imagery, as the Jewish people faced unprecedented trials. But the venerable sage lived before this period of testing. His was a time of more or less peace and stability, a time when the wisdom of the Hebrew Bible and the examples of Scripture's great heroes of faith were more than sufficient for forming a world view.[30]

29. Segal, "Life after Death."

30. See the very helpful introduction to the Wisdom of Yeshua ben Sira in David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 153–97. In much of what I say related to dating and providence of primary sources other than *The Gospel of Peter* I rely on the annotations, dating, bibliography and provenience information supplied by Craig A. Evans. See Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A*

We find in ben Sirah's wisdom a number of passages that express the idea that in this life (and not in a post-mortem life) the righteous are vindicated, while the wicked, even if only for an hour, remember their sin and "forget past delights."[31] In the words of the sage (Sir 11:26–28):

> 26 because it is easy with the Lord in a day of death
> to give back to a person according to his ways.
> 27 An hour's misery engenders forgetfulness of luxury,
> and a person's end is a disclosure of his deeds.
> 28 Before death call no one happy,
> and in his children a man will be known.

The sage does not anticipate a future life. To the extent that there may be post-mortem vindication or judgment, it comes through one's children: "in his children a man will be known" (v. 28).[32]

Later, the sage makes it clear that the dead are dead and will remain so. Our comfort lies in memory not in a hope of a "return." The sage declares (Sir 38:16–23):

> 16 Child, let your tears fall over a corpse,
> and as one suffering terribly begin a lament,
> but in accordance with his decision lay out his body,
> and do not neglect his burial.
> 17 Make the weeping bitter and the beating fervent,
> and make mourning according to his dignity,
> for one day and two for the purpose of slander,
> and be comforted for the sake of grief.

Guide to the Background Literature (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 15–16. For commentaries, see Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987); Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach, Ben Sira* (ATD: Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000). Fragments of Hebrew ben Sira have been found at Qumran (2Q18), Masada (MasSir), and the Cairo synagogue genizah. For critical analysis of the Hebrew text, see Yigael Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1965).

31. I have benefited here from Bryan, *Resurrection of the Messiah*, 10–12.

32. The Hebrew portion of this verse is extant, of which the last part literally reads: "in his end," that is, "in his children." The idea that one really does not know someone's state of blessedness until he dies is expressed in Greek wisdom of the eastern Mediterranean. Herodotus (fifth century BCE) quotes Solon (ca. 638–ca. 559 BCE) as saying: "Until he is dead, do not yet call a man happy, but only lucky" (*Histories* 1.32). The same sentiment is expressed by Aeschylus (ca. 525–ca. 456 BCE): "Only when man's life comes to its end in prosperity can one call that man happy" (*Agamemnon* 1.928).

18 For from grief issues death,
and grief of the heart will cripple strength.
19 In misery grief too endures,
and a poor person's life is a curse of the heart.
20 Do not give your heart over to grief;
withdraw from it, when you remember the end [τὰ ἔσχατα].
21 Do not forget, for there is no return [οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐπάνοδος],
and him you will not benefit, and yourself you will harm.
22 Remember his judgment, because so is yours also.
For me yesterday; for you today!
23 In the resting of the corpse, put to rest his memorial,
and be comforted by it in the departure of his spirit [ἐν ἐξόδῳ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ].

The sage's reference to the "exodus of his spirit" (v. 23) simply means the end of life; a departure from this life to another life is not implied. Because "there is no return" (v. 21) one should not waste life but keep in mind one's approaching "end," or (lit.) "the last things" (v. 20).

David deSilva comments that ben Sira "does not leave room for God's justice to work itself out in the postmortem punishment of the wicked or reward of the righteous."[33] DeSilva rightly challenges Francesco Saracino who has tried to argue that post-mortem existence, if not resurrection itself, is envisioned by the second-century sage.[34] Saracino appeals to Sir 46:12 and 49:10, among others. These interesting texts read:

46:12 May their bones sprout anew out of their plot [τὰ ὀστᾶ αὐτῶν ἀναθάλοι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῶν]
and their name be traded;
may it be renowned among their sons.

49:10 And may the bones of the twelve prophets [καὶ τῶν δώδεκα προφητῶν τὰ ὀστᾶ] sprout anew out of their place [ἀναθάλοι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῶν],
for they comforted Jacob
and they redeemed them in confidence of hope.

The "bones" of both passages may allude to the bones of Elisha in 2 Kgs 13:20–21 and perhaps also to the "dry bones" of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 37:5, 7). There is probably no allusion to resurrection itself. What we have here is poetic language. Ben Sira is not talking about resurrection

33. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 190.
34. Francesco Saracino, "Resurrezione in Ben Sira?," *Henoch* 4 (1982): 185–203.

or some form of post-mortem existence. The final line of 46:12 clarifies the meaning of the verse as a whole: "may it (i.e., the good name of the judges of Israel) be renowned (lit. glorified) among their sons." That is, their bones will "sprout anew out of their plot" through the commendable lives of their descendants. The same point is made in 49:10. Ben Sira expresses the hope that the great legacy of the Twelve Minor Prophets will live on. Even ben Sira's longing for the return of Elijah (48:1–11) should not be understood as belief in post-mortem existence or resurrection. In what sense ben Sira expected the famous prophet to return (and the hope derives from Mal 4:5), "to restore the tribes of Jacob" (48:10), is not clear. But it is very unlikely that general resurrection can be inferred from this hope. Ben Sira's reference to Elisha's bones that restored life to the dead man (48:13–14) is in praise of Elisha; it is not part of a doctrine of resurrection.

Only a generation after its composition Sirach's eschatology was dated. The theodicy of this great sage simply could not address the pressing problem of suffering and gross injustice, as it had come to be experienced during the brutal pogroms of Antiochus IV and the shocking betrayals of Israel's covenant on the part some of the Jewish people themselves.[35] It is not surprising that within two or three decades ideas of personal vindication in the afterlife, including the hope of resurrection, came to explicit and vivid expression in the literature of the second and first centuries BCE.

(3) *Wisdom of Solomon*

The Wisdom of Solomon, a pseudepigraphal text composed sometime in the last few decades of the first century, provides a sort of "half-way house," teaching vindication for the righteous but without advancing a doctrine of resurrection.[36] The Wisdom of Solomon confronts head on the problem of why the righteous suffer, often at the hands of the wicked, and

35. It is sometimes overlooked that much of the impetus toward Hellenization and the persecution of pious Jews who resisted it came from a number of Jewish elites, as the relevant Jewish sources themselves explicitly acknowledge (see Dan 11:30; 1 Macc 1:11–15; 2 Macc 4:7–15). See deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 45–55. Many of the same political and social dynamics came into play in the later Herodian and Roman period.

36. See the introduction to the Wisdom of Solomon in deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 127–52. For additional notes and bibliography, see C. A. Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 14–15. For commentaries, see David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; New York: Doubleday, 1979); Hans Hübner, *Die Weisheit Salomons: Liber sapientiae Salomonis* (ATD: Apokryphen 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

why the wicked seem to prosper.[37] The first five chapters are devoted to this theme.[38]

The author of Wisdom sums up the philosophy of the wicked (2:1–3):

> Short and sorrowful is our life, and there is no remedy when a man comes to his end [οὐκ ἔστιν ἴασις ἐν τελευτῇ ἀνθρώπου], and no one has been known to return from Hades. Because we were born by mere chance, and hereafter we shall be as though we had never been; because the breath in our nostrils is smoke, and reason is a spark kindled by the beating of our hearts. When it is extinguished, the body will turn to ashes [τέφρα ἀποβήσεται τὸ σῶμα], and the spirit will dissolve like empty air [τὸ πνεῦμα διαχυθήσεται ὡς χαῦνος ἀήρ].

The wicked go on to say that "our life will pass away like the traces of a cloud" (2:4) and "there is no return from our death" (2:5). Therefore, reason the wicked, we may as well pursue lives of pleasure and rapacity: "Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow… Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions" (2:10, 12).

The wicked are fools, says the author of Wisdom, in thinking they will escape judgment. The righteous who have died are at peace (3:2). The ungodly will be punished (3:10). Indeed, the "righteous man who has died will condemn the ungodly who are living" (4:16). The day will come when the wicked "will come with dread when their sins are reckoned up, and their lawless deeds will convict them to their face" (4:20). "Then the righteous man will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who make light of his labours. When they see him, they will be shaken with fear, and they will be amazed as his unexpected salvation [ἐπὶ τῷ παραδόξῳ τῆς σωτηρίας]" (5:1–2). The wicked will be punished, but "the righteous will live forever [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῶσιν], and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High will take care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord" (5:15–16).

The author of Wisdom does not speak expressly of resurrection but he does envision some sort of post-mortem vindication and existence. The problem of theodicy is thus addressed. The wrongs of this life will

37. It is not necessary to identify a specific time of persecution, such as the troubles in Egypt under Flaccus in the late 30s CE. See Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 23–24. The Wisdom of Solomon likely dates to an earlier period and has in mind the suffering the righteous have suffered at the hands of the wicked, from the Maccabean times to the author's own time.

38. Michael Kolarcik, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1–6* (AnBib 127; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1991).

be set right in the next life. A doctrine of resurrection may not have been advanced by the author of Wisdom, but his teaching does provide a theological context in which resurrection ideas could take hold and flourish, as we see in Daniel 12, 2 Maccabees 7, and other writings.

3. *Passages that Speak of the Resurrection of the Dead*

There are four passages in the Hebrew Bible that appear to speak explicitly of resurrection. How literally they should be understood is another question. Of the four one probably should be taken in a literal sense. Although two of them are late, they are important witnesses to the emergence of the resurrection ideas in the inter-testamental period. They also made important contributions to the hope of resurrection. I review them in their probable chronological order.

a. *Ezekiel's Vision of the Bones: Ezekiel 37:12–14*

Ezekiel's vision of the bones is widely recognized as a metaphor of national restoration. As N. T. Wright has said, it points "to a renewal of Israel's national life in which the Davidic monarchy would be restored, the nation would be reconstituted, and (ultimately) a new Temple would be built."[39] The passage reads (in the MT and LXX):

> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves [קברותיכם והעליתי אתכם מקברותיכם], O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves [קברותיכם ובהעלותי אתכם מקברותיכם], O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord. (Ezek 37:12–14 MT / RSV)

> Therefore, prophesy, and say, This is what the Lord says: Behold, I am opening your tombs and will bring you up out of your tombs [ἐγὼ ἀνοίγω ὑμῶν τὰ μνήματα καὶ ἀνάξω ὑμᾶς ἐκ τῶν μνημάτων ὑμῶν] and bring you into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves so that I might bring my people up out of their graves [ἐν τῷ ἀνοῖξαί με τοὺς τάφους ὑμῶν τοῦ ἀναγαγεῖν με ἐκ τῶν τάφων τὸν λαόν μου]. And I will

39. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 119–21, quotation 119. See also Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (OTL; London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 509–11.

> give my Spirit to you, and you shall live, and I will place you upon your own land, and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will act, says the Lord. (LXX)

Originally understood, the passage may well have been no more than a metaphor for the restoration of apostate, impure Israel, likened to corpse impurity and corruption. The prophet promises a demoralized nation that someday her creator God will act and restore life and purify. But in later traditions Ezekiel 37 came to be understood as speaking of literal resurrection. The language of the LXX, where we find τὰ μνήματα ("tombs," lit. "memorials") and τοὺς τάφους ("graves," lit. "burial [places]"), the standard Greek language for literal tombs and burial places, suggests this understanding. In later rabbinic and Christian interpretation Ezekiel will be cited as proof of the resurrection.[40]

b. *The Isaianic Apocalypse: Isaiah 26:19*

The original meaning of Isa 26:19 may well have been about the same as that of Ezek 37:12–14. The Hebrew prophetic Scriptures appear to affirm resurrection in the sense of a corporate preservation rather than an individual afterlife. The redemption of Israel from exile is viewed in terms of deliverance from the death of exile to a life of national restoration.

One of the most interesting texts in the Hebrew Bible is Isa 26:19, which reads (in the MT, LXX, and Targum):

40. For a selection of rabbinic interpretations of Ezek 37, with reference to literal resurrection (and sometimes in reference to the appearance of the Messiah), see *Mek.* on Exod 20:7–11 (*Bahodesh* §7); *Gen. Rab.* 13.6 (on Gen 2:5); 96.5 (on Gen 47:28); *Lev. Rab.* 27.4 (on Lev 22:27); *Deut. Rab.* 7.6 (on Deut 28:12); *Midr. Tanh. Wayyetze* §7.16 (on Gen 30:22); *Wayyeshev* §9.8 (on Gen 38:1); *Wayehi* §12.6 (on Gen 47:30); *Wayyaqhel* §10.6 (on Exod 35:30); *b. Sanh.* 92a; *Midr. Pss.* 78.5 (on Ps 78:26); 85.3 (on Ps 85:4); *Midr. Prov.* §10 (on Prov 10:2); *Pesiq. R.* 1.6; 42.7; perhaps *'Amida* §2. See also the discussion in Chapter 5. The debate in *b. Sanh.* 92a is especially interesting. Not surprisingly, some rabbis understand the reviving of the dry bones as proof of future resurrection, but others believe the vision is nothing more than a "parable." The Aramaic translation in the Ezekiel Targum is quite literal, possibly because the meturgeman saw no need to paraphrase. In his view the passage, in its Hebrew form, spoke clearly of future resurrection. Early Christian authors apparently understood Ezek 37 in reference to literal resurrection. See Matt 27:52–53 (either original or scribal gloss); *1 Clem.* 50:4; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 15.1; 34.1; Origen, *Commentary on John* §20 (on John 2:19); Cyprian, *Treatises* 3.58; *Apostolic Constitutions* 5.1.7.

חיו מתיך נבלתי יקומון הקיצו ורננו שׁכני עפר כי טל אורת טלך וארץ רפאים תפיל (MT)

Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall. (RSV)

ἀναστήσονται οἱ νεκροί, καὶ ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις, καὶ εὐφρανθήσονται οἱ ἐν τῇ γῇ· ἡ γὰρ δρόσος ἡ παρὰ σοῦ ἴαμα αὐτοῖς ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται. (LXX)

The dead shall rise, and those who are in the tombs shall be raised, and those who are in the earth shall rejoice; for the dew from you is healing to them, but the land of the impious shall fall. (RSV)

את הוא מחי מיתין גרמי נבילתהון את מקים ייחון וישׁבחון קדמך כל דהוו רמן בעפרא ארי טל ניהור טלך לעבדי אוריתך ורשׁיעיא דיהבתא להון גבורן ואנון עברו על מימרך לגיהנם תמסר (Targum)

You are he who brings alive the dead, you raise the bones of their bodies. All who were thrown into the dust will live and sing before you! For your dew is a dew of light for those who perform your law, and the wicked to whom you have given might, and they transgressed against your Memra, you will hand over to Gehenna.[41]

In Isa 26:19 the language of the dead arising and the dwellers of the dust awakening is metaphorical and probably does not refer to literal resurrection. Originally the verse may have been in reference to a national rebirth and restoration.[42] Moreover, many scholars believe "the Great Apocalypse," as Isaiah 24–27 is commonly known, is a much later insertion into Isaiah, perhaps contemporary with the Daniel passage.[43] Segal

41. The English translation is based on Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987), 51–52.

42. John Day, "The Development of Belief in Life after Death in Ancient Israel," in J. Barton and D. J. Reimer (eds.), *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 231–57.

43. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 171–74. For a succinct discussion involving these chapters where he argues they are apocalyptic and are a self-contained unit. Childs remarks that few sections of the Hebrew Bible have dealt with such a wide measure of scholarly disagreement. The date range is from the sixth century BCE to the third century BCE. More will be said about this important passage below. Given that the Great Isaiah Scroll (or 1QIsaiah[a]) could date as early as 200 BCE and that it contains chs. 24–27 without any indication of textual uncertainty, I should think that these chapters cannot be dated any later than the third century BCE.

does not interpret this passage as referring to a literal resurrection but believes the eighth-century prophet Isaiah wrote it in reference to the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem: "Whatever else is true, in context, it is not a clear and impressive prophecy of literal future bodily resurrection."[44] N. T. Wright does not agree: "The original Hebrew refers literally to bodily resurrection, and this is certainly how the verse is taken in the LXX and at Qumran."[45] Whereas Isa 26:19 originally referred metaphorically to the restoration of the nation, later it came to be understood as a reference to bodily resurrection. We see this in the LXX and Qumran (esp. 4Q521), as Wright says. We also see it in the somewhat later Targum. Borrowing the "bones" of Ezek 37:7 the Aramaic version treats us to a vivid picture of resurrection. The meturgeman not only heightens the element of resurrection, he takes the opportunity to interject (probably inspired by Dan 12:2b) the damnation of the wicked for having transgressed against God. The Aramaic interpretive paraphrase is quite late, of course, but it does attest the explicitness of the resurrection interpretation in the approximate time of Jesus and the early Christian Church.

c. *On the Third Day: Hosea 6:2*

Anticipating the eventual restoration of sinful Israel, the prophet Hosea utters a startling prediction:

יחינו מימים ביום השלישי יקמנו ונחיה לפניו (MT)

> After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we might live before him. (RSV)

ὑγιάσει ἡμᾶς μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ ἀναστησόμεθα καὶ ζησόμεθα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦν (LXX)

> After two days he will make us healthy; on the third day we will rise up and live before him.

יחיננא ליומי נחמתא דעתידין למיתי ביום אחיות מיתיא יקימיננא וניחי קדמיהי (Targum)

> He will give us life in the days of consolations that will come; on the day of the resurrection of the dead he will raise us up and we will live before him.

44. Segal, "Social Sources," 260–61.

45. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 117. Wright says that the "original Hebrew refers literally to bodily resurrection." But that is the problem. If the words are *literal*, the verse is probably late, no earlier than third century. If the words are *metaphorical*, perhaps in reference to national restoration, then the verse could be pre-exilic.

The original point of the prophecy concerned the restoration of the Northern Kingdom.[46] In later interpretation the possibility of reference to the resurrection of individuals was entertained. It is possible that the Greek translator saw it this way. In any event it is quite obvious that the meturgeman understand the passage in reference to the anticipated general resurrection at the end of time, or "in the days of consolations." It is probable that this passage lies behind Jesus' passion predictions, which is a matter that will be taken up in Chapter 6.[47]

d. *Daniel's Vision of Resurrection and Judgment: Daniel 12:2–3*

The author of Qoheleth, a book of uncertain date, rightly summarizes the changing tide in Jewish beliefs with the memorable words: "For everything there is a season" (Qoh 3:1). Jewish post-mortem beliefs were being modified and reshaped as the period of the Hebrew Scriptures was coming to a close and the intertestamental period was dawning. As is usually the case in any culture (and any time), social pressures and anxieties experienced in tragic circumstances, especially when there is loss of life, give rise to reflection, questions, and doubt. The Assyrian desolation of Israel, the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem and deportation of Judah, the scattering of the exiles, coupled with a humble post-exilic re-gathering and disappointing rebuilding of the Second Temple, challenged the Jewish people to think differently. These challenges gave rise to new ideas and were the root of new afterlife beliefs. The loss of innocent life through martyrdom and war, suffered during the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, gave way to a new interpretation of resurrection, which allowed the people to balance the scales of justice. Martin-Achard has stated that resurrection, comprising the determining factor of the New Testament's gospel, was the fruit of Jewish resistance to Hellenistic persecution.[48] As the Hebrew Scriptures were coming to a chronological close, perhaps faithful Jews saw some hope of afterlife in the Psalter prayer: "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol" (Ps 16:10; cf. Acts 2:24–32; 13:30–37). The Greek Stoic notion of extinction at death, which perhaps influenced Qoheleth, was altogether unsatisfying.

46. On the meaning of Hos 6:2 in its original context and setting, see James Luther Mays, *Hosea* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 95; Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 117; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC 31; Dallas: Word, 1987), 108.

47. Few early Christian writers exploited Hos 6:2. Tertullian was one. See his *Against Marcion* 4.43.1–2; and *Against the Jews* 13.23.

48. Martin-Achard, "Resurrection (OT)," 5:684.

Perhaps the only passage in the Hebrew Bible that speaks of a literal resurrection of individuals is Dan 12:2–3. The passage envisions the resurrection of the faithful to "everlasting life" and the resurrection of the wicked to "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2). The principal verse reads (in the MT and the two major Greek versions):

ורבים מישני אדמת־עפר יקיצו אלה לחיי עולם ואלה לחרפות לדראון עולם (MT)

> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (RSV)

καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ἀναστήσονται, οἱ μὲν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν, οἱ δὲ εἰς διασποράν καὶ αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον. (LXX)

> And many of those who sleep in the flat of the earth will arise, some to everlasting life but others to shame and others to dispersion [and contempt] everlasting.

καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν γῆς χώματι ἐξεγερθήσονται, οὗτοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ οὗτοι εἰς ὀνειδισμὸν καὶ εἰς αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον. (Θ)

> And many of those who sleep in a mound of earth will be awakened, these to everlasting life and those to shame and everlasting contempt.

This portion of Daniel was most likely written around 160 BCE.[49] Nickelsburg called Dan 12:1–3 "our earliest datable inter-testamental reference to a resurrection from the dead."[50] This passage is much later than the other traditions in the older Hebrew corpus. Obviously we cannot read Daniel 12 into the older Hebrew material. If the older passages refer to resurrection, they do so on their own merits.

We clearly observe development in the afterlife tradition of Sheol and individual resurrection in the promise in Daniel that those who "sleep in the land of dust will awake" (Dan 12:2). The phrase "land of dust" is likely a reference to Sheol, given that the term "dust" is used as a synonym for Sheol in Job 17:16.[51] The association of dust with resurrection was likely suggested by the older Isa 26:19.

49. For a succinct discussion, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 38: "Daniel 7 was composed in Aramaic early in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, before the desecration of the temple… Between 167 and 164 BCE the Hebrew chapters 8–12 were added… The glosses in 12:11–12 were added before the rededication of the temple."

50. In keeping with Jewish religious tradition I have retained Daniel in the Hebrew Bible section of this chapter but acknowledge Nickelsburg's second-century dating. See Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 23.

51. Ibid., 30. See also Collins, *Daniel*, 392.

The resurrection tradition in Daniel becomes significant for the New Testament authors writing on eschatological rewards and judgment. Thus, this passage is a turning point in many ways for the Judeo-Christian idea of resurrection. As one looks back in the Hebrew Bible the prospects of Sheol are grim and unsatisfying. In time, early Christian authors, as the Gospels record, came to interpret Dan 12:2–3 as providing motivation for holy living, always mindful of eschatological judgment and rewards.

4. *Conclusion*

The most primitive parts of the Hebrew Bible give little description or emphasis to the issues of post-mortem existence. Prior to foreign domination, the judgments of God and the blessings of God were understood in very physical terms. The "evanescent" rewards were to be enjoyed now because the shadowy existence of Sheol awaited all. A memory celebrated in the family line was intrinsically tied to the nation and the inhabitation of the land. Notwithstanding, Yahweh worked miracles in order to remind humans of his power over death: "The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam 2:6). I find that Hebrew Scriptures speak of some sort of post-mortem existence rather than annihilation, but the details are admittedly vague.

There is perhaps some evidence that Platonic notions influenced the Jewish conception of the soul and body, but in most cases Jewish anthropological beliefs relating to the indivisibility of the soul and body would not allow for any rescue from Sheol apart from a resurrected body. Not until the fierce persecutions of the second century BCE would bodily resurrection come to clear expression in Jewish Scriptures, as we see in Dan 12:2–3. In this historical context, the themes of "eschatological judgment and resurrection" emerge. The Jewish notion of Sheol seemed inadequate when large numbers of righteous Jews were perishing. Vindication was needed. Consequently, resurrection beliefs became a new way of affirming God's justice and abiding presence with his people. God would bless his people and vanquish their enemies, if not in this life, certainly in the life to come (cf. Dan 12:2–3).

I have argued in this chapter that the evidence of the Hebrew Scriptures is clear: the Hebrew Bible stresses the presence of God in the daily affairs of this life where concern for kin, homeland, nation, and legacy overshadowed matters of the individual's life after death. Furthermore, I have argued that social challenges elicited a new understanding of afterlife beliefs in the Jewish world. The *Torah* articulated the way life

was to be lived by the Jew enjoying the fruit of the labours in a just society. For a time, Israel enjoyed the fruit of her labours and the blessing of God. However, things usually change.

I have shown how the authors of the Hebrew Bible were creative in the way they were able to adapt their message to meet the needs of the people. Early on, and for several centuries, the literature of the Hebrew Bible showed little interest in afterlife beliefs, perhaps because the Law of Moses was working and people were enjoying the fruit of their labours. The loss of that blessed and autonomous social structure led to new insights and reflections. I have argued that later in the Hebrew corpus the explicit passage in Dan 12:2–3 emerged, providing solace to discouraged hearts. It appears that the Jewish writers were willing to generate new texts and create new interpretations, which speak to the hearts of the faithful suffering in the midst of persecution. The main argument of this section is that the resurrection tradition begins in the Hebrew Bible and, for the Jew, resurrection was a later innovated belief because the world was not as it ought to have been, as spelled out in the Law of Moses.

In what ways the Hebrew Bible contributed to concepts of afterlife and resurrection in Second Temple Judaism will be our concern in the following chapter. Although we shall observe some dramatic and novel developments, it will be clear that the roots of these developments are planted deeply in the soil of Israel's ancient Scriptures.

Chapter 5

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF RESURRECTION IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM: RAISED TO LIFE OR DAMNED TO HELL

In the late Second Temple period Jewish voices began to give explicit expression to the concept of a meaningful afterlife, whether bodily resurrection or the continuity of the spirit. The resurrection idea, in one form or another, appears in a variety of Jewish writings, including apocalyptic, apocryphal, pseudepigraphal, and wisdom books. Throughout most of the period covered by the Hebrew Scriptures, the Israelites appeared to remain content with the traditional concept of Sheol as the abode of "the shades" of all the departed, where existence is hardly meaningful.[1] However, in inter-testamental Judaism interest in the afterlife grew largely in response to the expectation that God would vindicate his people, many of whom had suffered, through a general resurrection. This growing hope envisioned resurrection followed by reward for the righteous and judgment and damnation for the wicked, including and especially those who oppressed the righteous of Israel.

It is the explicit articulation of bodily resurrection that is the conceptual antecedent of the gospel accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. At the very least the intertestamental tradition would have influenced how Jesus and his contemporaries would have viewed the eschatological hope of resurrection and new life, as well as how they

1. See Richard Bauckham, "Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead: A Traditional Image of Resurrection in the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocalypse of John," in J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans (eds.), *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (JSPSup 14; SSEJC 2; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 269–91; idem, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," in Longenecker (ed.), *Life in the Face of Death*, 80–95; Bryan, *Resurrection of the Messiah*, 9–18. With special reference to burial traditions, see Eric M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth* (BibOr 24; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971), 12–16.

would have interpreted those apparently dead who were raised up in the course of the ministry of Jesus. The literature of the intertestamental period provides an invaluable link between the Hebrew Bible and the world of Jesus and his followers who recounted his story.

In the tumultuous intertestamental period, as we see in the story of Hanukkah, as Segal retells it, pious Jews were martyred for their faith, probably for the first time in Jewish history.[2] The theme of the persecution and exaltation of the righteous person is fundamental and formative in the development of the Jewish concept of resurrection. Resurrection emerges out of a new genre of literature known as "martyrology."[3] Segal points out that although the term "martyr" is not found in texts antedating Christian accounts, the pattern of celebrating the death of heroes is. Segal states: "When the text says that they leave behind a pattern or model (2 Macc 6:31) of nobility and memory of virtue, the major theme was that of the righteous persecuted and then rewarded by God."[4] C. F. Evans refers to late Second Temple Judaic writings as a "literature of revolt, when Judaism was now more conscious of itself" and the needs of its community.[5]

Authors in the late Second Temple period were also creative in their expression of the diversity of views relating to post-mortem vindication. Robert Pfeiffer recognized Jewish writings of this period as "so alive, so progressive, so agitated by controversies, that under its spacious roof the most contrasting views were held until a greater uniformity was reached after 200 CE."[6] N. T. Wright surveys the range of the belief in the afterlife at this time:

> Jews, it used to be said, believed in resurrection, while Greeks believed in immortality. Like most half-truths, this one is as misleading as it is informative, if not more so. If the Bible offers a spectrum of belief about life after

2. Segal, "Life after Death," 266. In this connection, the book of Tobit is worth consulting, where we hear of Jews murdered (perhaps even "martyred") and left along the highway unburied.

3. Ibid., 267.

4. Ibid., 267–68.

5. C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, 15.

6. Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times: With an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper, 1949), 53. For additional studies that have rightly emphasized the importance of the intertestamental period, see also Aimo T. Nikolainen, *Der Auferstehungsglaube in der Bibel und ihrer Umwelt* (2 vols.; AASF 1–2; Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia, 1944–46); Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*; and Odette Mainville and Daniel Marguerat (eds.), *Résurrection: l'après-mort dans le monde ancien et le Nouveau Testament* (Geneva: Labor et Fides; Montréal: Médiaspaul, 2001).

> death, the second-Temple period provides something more like an artist's palette: dozens of options, with different ways of describing similar positions and similar ways of describing different ones. The more texts and tombstones we study, the more there seem to be. Almost any position one can imagine on the subject appears to have been espoused by some Jews somewhere in the period between the Maccabean crisis and the writing of the Mishnah, roughly 200 BCE to AD 200.[7]

Jewish persecution in the late Second Temple period provided a context in which Hebrew Bible passages were being reinterpreted and also provided the impetus for explicit resurrection texts to emerge. Resurrection emerges as a necessity in Jewish life tailored for Jewish culture to speak to the moral, social, and political needs of the community. In the inter-testamental period, "resurrection" emerges as one way of describing the action of God in the deliverance of his oppressed people with significant eschatological consequences.[8] However, this takes more than one form.[9] Not all resurrection literature was written in response to oppression.[10] New texts emerged providing hope for the persecuted and the motivation to remain in the faith. However, it also needs to be stated—and sometimes it is omitted in recent scholarship concerned with these matters—that some Jews continued to hold to the view that death was the final end of one's existence. This view is attested in the Wisdom of ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus). It is a view that continues to be held, even in the time of Jesus. For according to Josephus and the Synoptic Gospels, this was one of the doctrines of the aristocratic, elitist Sadducees who explicitly rejected the idea of resurrection.

1. *Concepts of Eschatological Judgment in Inter-testamental Literature*

The political upheavals, pogroms, persecutions, defections, and apostasies created an environment that was conducive to the writing of a vast and varied assortment of literature. Because of a growing awareness of the "canonical" status of the older sacred literature, many of the writers of the

7. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 129.

8. As we saw in the Wisdom of Solomon, briefly considered in Chapter 4, the eschatological righting of wrongs does not require resurrection.

9. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, 15–16. See Evans' helpful comments on p. 16 n. 35.

10. The *Psalms of Solomon*; *1 En.* 22; *4 Ezra* 7; *Sib. Or.* 4; *T. Benj.* 10. See Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 163–78.

inter-testamental period felt it necessary to write in the names of ancient worthies. Accordingly, a number of apocalypses and testaments came into existence, circulated under the names of the patriarchs, the great lawgiver, and Israel's celebrated monarchs and prophets. A common theme in these writings is judgment, the anticipation that someday the books will be opened, resulting in reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.

a. *Historical and Social Context in which Resurrection Emerges*

The Maccabean revolt and the violence that it entailed provided the context for the emergence of a more fully developed belief in resurrection in Judaism. Antiochus IV Epiphanes not only demanded that the Jewish people worship Zeus, he also demanded that they worship him. On many of the coins that survive one can see the figure of Zeus, whose features closely resemble those of the Antiochid tyrant. One in the British Museum, a silver tetradrachma, presents the head of Antiochus IV as if he were Zeus, crowned with laurel. Its inscription reads: "(Coin) of King Antiochus, God Manifest, Victory-bearer." Antiochus imposed restrictions on Jewish traditions and forced Greek customs on the Jewish population. An edict forbade the rite of circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath. Torah scrolls were to be burned. A pagan altar dedicated to the worship of Zeus was built in the Jerusalem temple (the "abomination of desolation" in Dan 11:31; 12:11). As a sign of loyalty, Jews were required to offer pagan sacrifices, including the offering of swine flesh. Antiochus placed Seleucid troops in Jerusalem at a citadel known as the Akra to ensure compliance to his edicts. On two occasions Seleucid troops plundered the temple on the orders of the king.

This intolerable social context presented realities and pressures not before experienced by the Jews, forcing them to look into their Scriptures for a fresh word from God. A theological problem needed to be answered: "Why were *Torah*-obedient Jews suffering and even being martyred? What would their vindication be?" After all, did not Torah promise blessing if the people of Israel remained faithful to the law and the covenant? The severe persecution and subsequent theological problem led Jews to rethink their beliefs about the afterlife. Some found a solution in the vindication and judgment of eschatological resurrection. The interplay of the righteous, being rewarded for obedience to the Torah (in eternity and not only in this life as is seen in the Hebrew Scriptures), and evildoers, being raised up to face judgment, becomes significant. For pious Jews of that time, belief in an apocalyptic judgment, including resurrection, grew in prominence (Dan 12:1–3; *1 En.* 22–27; 92–105; *Jub.* 23:11–31; 2 Macc 7;

4 Macc 7:3; *4 Ezra* 7:26–42; *2 Bar.* 21:23; 30:2–5; Josephus, *J.W*. 2.154; 2.165–66; *Ant.* 18.14, 16, 18). The Pharisees promoted and elaborated on the tradition found in Dan 12:2–3 (and perhaps also in Isa 26:19).

b. *Separation, Reward, and Punishment in the Afterlife*

Prior to the Maccabean revolt, intertestamental Judaism began rethinking and developing the concept of Sheol. There are divisions within Sheol for the wicked and the righteous, in which each inmate experiences a foretaste of their final destiny (*1 En*. 22:1–14). This tradition appears to underlie the metaphors of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31. Joachim Jeremias had this to say on the origins of Jewish beliefs in eschatological judgment:

> Then under the influence of Persian and Hellenistic ideas concerning retribution after death the belief arose that the righteous and the godless would have very different fates, and we thus have the development of the idea of spatial separation in the underworld, the first instance being found in *Eth. Enoch* 22. According to Josephus *Ant.*, 18, 14 the Pharisees held this view. The penetration into Palestine, through the mediation of the *Diaspora*, of the belief in immortality led to the idea that the souls of the righteous proceed at once to heavenly felicity after death, there to await their resurrection.[11]

The views of Jeremias today are somewhat dated, but ongoing analysis of additional inter-testamental texts, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, has confirmed this picture.

In *Testament of Abraham* 11 the righteous dead are separated from the unrighteous dead.[12] Craig Evans states, "The latter element is in keeping with rabbinic traditions of afterlife and judgment, in which the great patriarchs are sometimes depicted as gatekeepers, directing the righteous (who almost always are Torah-observant Jews) to paradise and the wicked (Gentiles and sometimes apostate Jews) to Gehenna."[13] Although this tradition is greatly elaborated in the rabbinic literature of later centuries, the parable of the Rich Man (Luke 16:19–30) testifies to the circulation of at least an incipient form of this teaching in the early first century. E. P. Sanders assigns the date of the composition of the *Testament of Abraham* to a time between the first century BCE and first century CE.[14]

11. Joachim Jeremias, "ᾅδης in Later Judaism," *TDNT* 1:147.

12. With respect to the *Testament of Abraham*, it is noteworthy that E. P. Sanders was the editor-translator of the *Testament of Abraham* in vol. 2 of James H. Charlesworth's *OTP*. See Michael S. Heiser and Ken Penner (eds.), *Old Testament Greek Pseudepigrapha with Morphology* (Logos Bible Software, 2008), n. p.

13. C. A. Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 43.

14. E. P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham," *OTP* 1:871–902.

Sirach (ca. 180 BCE), also known as Ecclesiasticus, is of value because it provides extensive evidence for the character of Judaism and Jewish society in Palestine just prior to the Maccabean revolt (167–164 BCE). As noted in Chapter 4, Sirach echoes the perspective of Hebrew Scripture about the finality of death, teaching that those in Sheol are cut off from God (Sir. 17:27–28) and all that remains of an individual after death is honour and a good name (37:26). To be sure, some wonder if there may still be a post-mortem hope in Sirach, for in reference to the judges and prophets he says, "may their bones send forth new life from where they lie" (46:12; 49:10).[15] This statement may reflect emerging afterlife beliefs in Judaism in the early second century BCE, but it is more likely a metaphor suggesting that the legacy of Israel's faithful judges and prophets will bear fruit in the times to come.

Eighteen Hebrew psalms known as *The Psalms of Solomon* were composed ca. 50 BCE. They echo the themes of God's righteous judgment, God's vindicating judgment, and eternal rewards for the righteous. These psalms survive in Greek and Syriac manuscripts. Several chapters in the *Psalms of Solomon* (i.e. chs. 3, 13, 14, 15) focus on afterlife restitution. About these psalms Nickelsburg remarks:

> The righteous "will rise to eternal life" while the fate of the sinners is "eternal destruction." Such reward and punishment are dispensed not as compensation for the injustices of this life, but as reward and punishment for piety and sin—apart from one's lot in life. The authors do not indicate whether they anticipate a bodily resurrection or the reviving of one's spirit or soul.[16]

Now extant only in Latin manuscripts, there is substantial scholarly agreement that the *Biblical Antiquities* (also known as Pseudo-Philo) was originally composed in Hebrew in Palestine, towards the end of the first century CE.[17] The work is generally accepted as an example of Rewritten Bible, covering the period from Adam to the death of Saul, although it is highly selective in its treatment of the Hebrew Scriptures. Rewritten Bible, as a genre (more or less), generally includes condensation, omission, supplementation and reshaping. New names and genealogies are added,

15. D. R. Seely, "Resurrection," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 1121.

16. George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Resurrection (Early Judaism and Christianity)," *ABD*, 5:690.

17. A full discussion of the compositional structure and textual provenance can be found in Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (2 vols.; AGJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:196–201; Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Daniel J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," *OTP* 2:297–388.

problems are explained, discrepancies are resolved, speeches and prayers are rewritten, biblical language is modernized and the biblical narratives are often enriched with details from similar biblical accounts.[18] Not exactly commentary, Rewritten Bible, as the name implies, retells the biblical story, updating and clarifying along the way.[19]

Pseudo-Philo foretells apocalyptic judgment and reward:

> But when the years of the world shall be fulfilled, then shall the light cease and the darkness be quenched: and I will make alive the dead and raise up from the earth them that sleep [*et vivificabo mortuos et erigam dormientes de terra*]: and Hell shall pay his debt and destruction give back that which was committed unto him, that I may render unto every man according to his works and according to the fruit of their imaginations, even until I judge between the soul and the flesh. And the world shall rest, and death shall be quenched, and Hell shall shut his mouth. And the earth shall not be without birth, neither barren for them that dwell therein: and none shall be polluted that hath been justified in me. And there shall be another earth and another heaven, even an everlasting habitation. (3:10)[20]

This remarkable passage is rich with detail. At places it parallels a number of other passages that treat similar theme, such *4 Ezra* 7:31–44; *2 Bar.* 42:50–51; and *1 En.* 51:1–4. The promise, "I will raise up from the earth them that sleep," echoes Isa 26:19 ("the dead will live, their bodies shall rise…dwellers in the dust, awake") and Dan 12:2 ("those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake").[21]

c. *Intertestamental Literature attesting Bodily Resurrection*

Jewish literature of the period attests the belief in bodily resurrection following martyrdom.[22] This "bodily resurrection" was interpreted in this literature as God's vindication of innocent victims. Probably the most significant example is seen in 2 Maccabees 7 (ca. first century BCE), which

18. C. A. Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 70.

19. For further discussion, see Craig A. Evans, "Rewritten Scripture," in Craig A. Evans (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 505–6.

20. Translation based on Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," 2:307; Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 1:91.

21. For detailed notes on this important passage, see Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 1:323–28; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 34–35.

22. Craig A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection?," in Porter, Hayes, and Tombs (eds.), *Resurrection*, 82–97.

recounts the martyrdom of the pious Jewish family made up of a mother and her seven sons (cf. the parallel *4 Macc* 8–17).[23] The second son's final words directed at Antiochus are noteworthy:

> You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life [εἰς αἰώνιον ἀναβίωσιν ζωῆς ἡμᾶς ἀναστήσει], because we have died for his laws. (2 Macc 7:9)

The fourth son also articulates the hope in resurrection:

> One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again [πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι] by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life! (2 Macc 7:14)

In her speech the mother herself proclaims her belief that God will give back life and breath to her martyred sons (2 Macc 7:23) and return them to her (2 Macc 7:29). The explicit resurrection faith in 2 Maccabees pronounces doom upon Antiochus, "You shall have no resurrection to life [ἀνάστασις εἰς ζωὴν οὐκ ἔσται]" (2 Macc 7:14). Does this declaration contradict Dan 12:2, which speaks explicitly of the wicked being resurrected or "awakened" to judgment? Perhaps not. After all, the threat that one will not be raised up "to life" does not preclude the idea that one will be raised up to "everlasting contempt." In my view, both passages, Dan 12:2 and 2 Macc 7:14, are complementary (and each may have been influenced by Isa 26:19).

As already noted, the book of Daniel provides important late Second Temple evidence for belief in the resurrection, especially subsequent to a period of persecution and martyrdom: Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake / rise up [MT: יקיצו / LXX: ἀναστήσονται], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2).

The growing influence of the doctrine of resurrection, as seen in Dan 12:2; 2 Macc 7; and other texts did not mean that the non-resurrection afterlife ideas disappeared. One need look no further than *4 Maccabees*, a book written in the first half of the first century CE, which elaborates philosophically on the lessons to be learned from the courage of Eleazar and the sons who suffered martyrdom (as originally told in 2 Macc 6–7). In place of the bold and explicit affirmations of resurrection hope we

23. For a detailed discussion of the notion of "dying for God" see Jeremiah J. Johnston and C. A. Evans, "Intertestamental Backdrop to the Later Development of the Christian Sacraments," in Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 37–51.

hear instead affirmations like "they believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God, but live to God" (*4 Macc* 7:19) and "For we, through his severe suffering and endurance, shall have the prize of virtue and shall be with God" (*4 Macc* 9:8).

In 2 Maccabees prayers and sin offerings are even offered for the dead in hope of a resurrection:

> He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection [ὑπὲρ ἀναστάσεως διαλογιζόμενος]. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again [τοὺς προπεπτωκότας ἀναστῆναι προσεδόκα], it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin. (2 Macc 12:43–45)[24]

Important resurrection teaching is also found in *4 Ezra*, which was written by a Jew at the end of the first century CE.[25] This book describes an apocalypse consisting of seven revelations. In the wake of the fall of Jerusalem the author promises what appears to be a universal resurrection for Jews:

> The earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who rest there in silence; and the chambers shall give up the souls that have been committed to them. Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, "Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised." (*4 Ezra* 7:32, 37)

24. Perhaps this could inform the interpretive history of 1 Cor 15:29, "Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?" For more on this intriguing passage, see Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Academia Biblica; Leiden: Brill, 2005). On the text and meaning of 2 Macc 12:43–45, see Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (AB 41A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 450–51.

25. Chapters 3–14 comprise the original *4 Ezra*. Sometime in the second century a Christian added chs. 1–2. A century or so later another Christian added chs. 15–16. This expanded work is part of the Old Testament Apocrypha and bears the name 2 Esdras. For a succinct explanation of the compositional history of *4 Ezra*/2 Esdras, see Bruce M. Metzger (ed.), *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 23.

Commenting on this passage R. H. Charles explains, "At the resurrection the soul would return to and revive the body. This is the orthodox rabbinic doctrine."[26] Similarly, the *Sibylline Oracles* (ca. second century BCE to the seventh century CE) state that the resurrection body will be fashioned exactly after the earthly body (4:176–182). Uniquely, both Jews and Christians eventually contributed to the collection that now makes up the loose corpus scholars call the Pseudepigrapha.

Various destinations are assigned to the righteous and the godless after death. Often, as in *1 Enoch*, there are locales of "heaven" where the righteous will enjoy eternal peace or the Gentile/Apostate will be punished. The most attested term designating the heavenly destination for the righteous is "paradise." Paradise, like resurrection, has a variety of portrayals in late Second Temple literature, although it is mostly described as a garden full of fruit trees (*2 En.* 8: every tree bears ripe fruit and has a lovely fragrance, and rivers flow softly by). While God rests under the tree of life, which has an indescribably lovely fragrance, it is sometimes called the third heaven (*2 En.* 8), while, at other times, it is located on earth (*1 En.* 32). According to the *Sibylline Oracles*, paradise will be on earth. Charlesworth comments on the prominence of paradise in late Second Temple Jewish literature. His comments are helpful and may be quoted at length:

> Paradise is sometimes perceived as the (post-resurrection) intermediate abode of the righteous (*1 Enoch* 37–70), or as the hidden eschatological place of the righteous (*2 Enoch* 8). Other passages describe the righteous enjoying life in Paradise or Eden, but provide no indication of their duration there (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 21). It is also frequently portrayed as closed (4 Ezra 7), as one would expect from the Genesis account of the expulsion; note *2 En* 42:3, "And I ascended into the east, into the Paradise of Eden, where rest is prepared for the righteous. And it is open as far as the third heaven; but it is closed from this world." This passage seems to result from an attempt to resolve the tension arising from placing Paradise on the earth and also in the third heaven. Jews did not think about diverse places, but only one and the same Paradise. In 4 Ezra, Ezra is told, "for you…Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed …" (8:52; cf. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 21). The Jewish apocalypses contain the conviction that the final (or second) age will be characterized by the blessed state at creation of the first age, but without the possibility of disobedience, disharmony, discomfort, and discontinuity. Only in this sense can it be said that the Paradise of the first age reappears in the second (final) age. The Jewish

26. See *4 Ezra* 7:32 in R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 583.

myth of Paradise is so developed by the end of the first century CE that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* freely borrowed from it in describing the garden beneath Aseneth's tower.[27]

d. *Immortality of the Soul and Other Options from Late Second Temple Judaism*

Afterlife speculations vary during this period. *4 Maccabees*, already mentioned in connection to the stories of the martyrs, entertains the immortality of the soul but not necessarily resurrection (cf. *4 Macc* 10:15, with 2 Macc 7:14 and *4 Macc* 9:22; 16:13; 18:23).

The immortality of the soul is stressed in the Wisdom of Solomon, which was also originally written in Greek and probably originates from Alexandria in the first century BCE.[28] The Wisdom of Solomon teaches a more philosophical approach to the immortality of the soul (Wis 1:1–6:21): "God created man for immortality and made him an image of his own proper being" (Wis 2:23); "The souls of the righteous are in God's hand" (Wis 2:1; 3:1). Wise souls are linked to immortality, "…their hope is full of immortality" (Wis 3:1), but in what sense? We find no explicit promise of resurrection in this book. Indeed, the wise teacher avers: "No one has been known to have returned from the grave" (Wis 2:1).

1 Enoch, also known as *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch*,[29] is centred on the well known Hebrew Bible figure Enoch, who was translated to heaven without dying. *1 Enoch*, with its five divisions (c. 200 BCE–50 CE), offers perhaps the best example of the elasticity of "resurrection" in the inter-testamental period, for it contains different perspectives. The oldest inter-testamental material is found in the *Book of the Watchers* (i.e. *1 En.* 1–36), which dates to the third century BCE. In ch. 22, the angel Raphael informs Enoch of the place where "All the souls of humans are gathered," and where they await judgment (vv. 3–4). In contrast to the righteous, the wicked will not "be raised later from" this place (v. 13). Eventually Enoch learns that the lifespan of the righteous will be extended: "They will live much life on earth, which your fathers lived" (25:4–6). Resurrection is not explicitly mentioned, nor is eternal life, but the promise of a long, healthy life appears to be a step in this direction. In a later section of *Enoch* known as the *Epistle of Enoch* (i.e. *1 En.* 92–105), which dates

27. James H. Charlesworth, "Paradise," *ABD*, 5:154.

28. C. A. Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 14.

29. So called because the only fully extant version of this originally Aramaic text is in Ethiopic. Large portions of the work survive in Greek and a number of Aramaic fragments have been found at Qumran. The importance of this text, which is in the Ethiopian Christian canon of Scripture, is hard to exaggerate.

to the second century BCE, the resurrection of the righteous is promised, "Be of good cheer, souls of the righteous who have died, the just and the godly…let them rise up and be saved, and they shall see us eating and drinking forever" (102:4, 8).[30]

In *2 Baruch* 50–51 or the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* (ca. early second century CE), the resurrection body is not a transfigured, unidentifiable form, but the reanimated physical body restored from earth for the purpose of identification.[31] A Jewish author, wishing to encourage fellow Jews in the diaspora and echoing the Dan 12:2–3 apocalyptic judgment passage, states:

> For the earth shall then assuredly restore the dead; it receives them now, in order to preserve them. It shall make no change in their form. But as it has received, so shall it restore them. And as I delivered them to it, so also shall it raise them… For the aspect of those who now act wickedly shall become worse than it is, and they shall suffer torment. (*2 Bar.* 50:2; 51:2)[32]

Different forms of resurrection emerge in different locations (resurrection to earth, to a new earth, or to some type of Paradise), time (to a Messianic period belonging to this age, to eternal life in perpetuity), and form (a reconstituted body, a transformed body, without body).[33] In answer to a question from Baruch, God tells him that the dead will rise from the earth and that they will recognize one another (*2 Bar.* 50:4). After that they will change: the godless will look worse than before, while the righteous will receive beautiful bodies (*2 Bar.* 51:10). They will receive the glory of the angels. Yet it seems as if this process will not stop there and that there will be even further bodily changes after this resurrection. The resurrected people will see the glory of paradise and the angels themselves, before they become even more glorious than the angels (*2 Bar.* 51:12).

e. *Resurrection Expectation in Other Pseudepigraphal Texts*

A few other pseudepigraphal texts that date from the first century BCE to the first century CE can be mentioned briefly. These texts were not

30. Craig A. Evans, "Resurrection," in Paul Copan and Chad Meister (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 566–75.

31. C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, 16.

32. Translation based on R. H. Charles, "II Baruch," in Charles (ed.), *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:508. See also A. F. J. Klijn, "2 Baruch," *OTP* 1:638.

33. C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, 16.

especially influential, so not too much weight should be placed on them, but they do attest in important ways popular piety and eschatological expectations at the turn of the era.

Resurrection expectation is explicit in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a collection of Testaments that began to appear in the second century BCE. Simeon says: "Then I will arise in joy [ἀναστήσομαι ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ], and will bless the Most High because of his wonderful works" (*T. Sim.* 6:7, omitting the Christian gloss). Judah assures his sons: "They who have died in grief will arise in joy [ἀναστήσονται ἐν χαρᾷ], and they who were poor because of the Lord will be made rich, and the poor will be fed, and the weak will be made strong, and they who are put to death for the Lord will awaken to life [οἱ διὰ κύριον ἀποθανόντες ἐξυπνισθήσονται ἐν ζωῇ]" (*T. Judah* 25:4). Similarly, Benjamin prophesies to his sons: "And then will you see Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rising to the right hand in gladness. Then will we also rise [ἀναστησόμεθα], each one over our tribe, worshipping the King of heaven… Then also all men will rise, some to glory and some to shame [πάντες ἀναστήσονται, οἱ μὲν εἰς δόξαν, οἱ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν]…" (10:6–8, with Christian glosses omitted).

The author of the *Psalms of Solomon*, a work probably produced a decade or two after Pompey's conquest of Judea, assures his readers that sinners will be eternally destroyed: "But they that fear the Lord will rise to life eternal [ἀναστήσονται εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον]. And their life (shall be) in the light of the Lord, and will come to an end no more" (*Pss. Sol.* 3:12). The Church Father Epiphanius quotes Isa 26:19 and then describes a lost *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, which he says, contains "things mentioned about the resurrection [τὰ...ῥηθέντα περὶ ἀναστάσεως]" (*Against Heresies* 64.70.5–6). Epiphanius then recites the well-known parable of the Lame Man and Blind Man, a parable known to the Rabbis (e.g. *b. Sanh.* 91a–b). The point of the parable, however, has more to do with divine judgment than it has to do with resurrection itself. The apocryphal work probably dates to the end of the first century BCE or beginning of the first century CE.

At about the same time the *Testament of Job* began to circulate. The angel reveals to Job: "And you shall be raised up in the resurrection [ἐγερθήσῃ ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει]" (*T. Job* 4:9). Some suspect this verse is a Christian gloss. It could be, but the Greek version of canonical Job has already introduced the idea of resurrection: "And Job died, being old and full of days; and it is written that he will rise again with those the Lord raises up [αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι μεθ' ὧν ὁ κύριος ἀνίστησιν]" (LXX Job 42:17[a]). This Greek reading is echoed in at least one manuscript at the end of the *Testament of Job*, at 53:8: "And it was written that he was raised

with those who the Lord raised up" (ms V).[34] In view of these readings, *T. Job* 4:9 may be authentic and nothing more than a reflection of the understanding of Job in the Greek tradition a generation or so before the rise of the Christian movement.

Penned sometime in the first century CE, the *Lives of the Prophets* sum up some of the more notable lives and ministries of wel- known and lesser-known prophets. In the chapter devoted to Jeremiah the prophet is credited with a very strange prediction: "In the resurrection the ark will rise first [ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει πρώτη ἡ κιβωτὸς ἀναστήσεται] and will come forth from the rock and will be placed on Mount Sinai, and all the holy ones will be gathered to it there, awaiting the Lord and fleeing the enemy that wishes to destroy them" (*Lives* 2.12).

The *Life of Adam and Eve*, also written and circulated in the first century CE, has Adam and Eve speak several times of the hope of resurrection. A few examples from the Greek version (also known as the *Apocalypse of Moses*) include Eve's lament: "Woe is me; woe is me! If I come to the day of the resurrection [ἐὰν ἔλθω εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς ἀναστάσεως], all those who have sinned will curse me, saying: 'Eve did not keep the commandment of God'" (10:2). Michael the archangel tells their son Seth: "Then will all flesh be raised up [ἀναστήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ] from Adam till that great day, as many as will be a holy people" (13:3). The Lord tells Adam: "When you have left paradise, if you should keep yourself from all evil, as one about to die, when again the resurrection comes to pass [ἀναστάσεως πάλιν γενομένης ἀναστήσω σε], I will raise you up and then there will be given to you the Tree of Life" (28:4). God again promises Adam new life: "Again I promise you the resurrection [τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἐπαγγέλλομαί σοι]. I will raise you up in the resurrection [ἀναστήσω σε ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρα ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει] with every human who is of your seed" (41:3). The work ends with Michael giving Seth a commission: "Thus prepare every human who dies, until the day of the resurrection [ἕως ἡμέραν τῆς ἀναστάσεως]" (43:2).

A final example is found in the B recension of the *Testament of Abraham*, a work that was composed in the first or second century CE. Michael explains to the great patriarch: "Your son Isaac has spoken truth, for you will go, and be taken up into the heavens, [16] "but your body will remain on earth, until seven thousand ages are fulfilled, for then all flesh will arise [ἐγερθήσεται πᾶσα σάρξ]" (*T. Abr.* B 7:15–16). The words, "all flesh will arise," echo *Life of Adam and Eve* 13:3, where we find the verb ἀναστήσεται.

34. For details, see Russell P. Spittler, "Testament of Job," *OTP* 1:829–68, esp. 841 n. 6, 868 n. f.

f. *Contemplation of the Afterlife at Qumran*

The witness of Qumran is important, for it includes the theology of a priestly oriented group, committed to assuming control of the temple. According to Mark Bredin:

> We find among Jewish writings the importance of suffering as a form of witness that brings about conversion and judgment. We find at Qumran the hope of the resurrection. In spite of their suffering, the faithful are encouraged to remember their heavenly hope.[35]

The Qumran *War Scrolls* foretell a great battle between the "sons of righteousness" and the "sons of darkness." The *Community Rule Scroll* (3:13–4:26) promises reward for the righteous and judgment on the wicked in the afterlife. The *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) and the *Rule of War* (4Q285) anticipate a great battle and its aftermath. Although these texts are distinct, they may presuppose a common understanding of the role of the Messiah, which in turn may shed important light on the meaning of Isa 26:19 a generation or so before the time of Jesus.

As mentioned earlier, Isaiah 24–27 comprises a unit of material in the larger book of Isaiah that scholars think was composed and inserted sometime in the post-exilic period. One of the most interesting verses in this section is 26:19:

> Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.
> You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
> For your dew is a dew of light,
> and the earth will give birth to the dead.

In the nineteenth century many commentators interpreted this remarkable prophecy in reference to the revival and restoration of the nation of Israel, akin to Ezekiel's Vision of Dry Bones (Ezek. 37).[36] Today commentators understand the text as promising the bodily resurrection of God's people, whatever its original form and meaning.[37] Most see it related in one way

35. Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Nonviolent Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 99.

36. See Childs, *Isaiah*, 191–92. The collective or "community" interpretation is still defended in R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 216–17.

37. For a sampling of contemporary scholarship, see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC 24; Dallas: Word, 1985), 401; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 370–71. For a notable example of an older commentator who sees in Isa 26:19 bodily resurrection, see George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I–XXXIX* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 446–47. See also Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, 130–32.

or another to the vision expressed in Dan 12:2, itself a response to the deaths of many Jews martyred at the hands of Antiochus IV.[38] Qumran seems to have understood it the same way, but with an interesting twist.

The Qumran community interpreted Isa 26:19 not in terms of a national restoration but in terms of personal resurrection. Here is the principal text, in which an allusion to Isa 26:19 seems likely:

> [… For the hea]vens and the earth shall obey his Messiah…the th[ro]ne of his eternal kingdom, setting prisoners free… For he shall heal the wounded, he shall make alive the dead [מתים יחיה], he shall send good news to the afflicted. (4Q521 frag. 2, col. 2, lines 1 and 12)

4Q521's מתים יחיה ("make alive the dead") very likely echoes יחיו מתיך ("your dead will live") of Isa 26:19. Interpreters have rightly observed the presence of a number of words and phrases from Isaiah (such as Isa 35:5–6; 61:1–2; as well as 26:19) and Psalm 146. What is curious is the promise that the Messiah "will heal the wounded" or even "heal the slain" (ירפא חללים). Healing the blind and such seems natural enough, but reference to healing the wounded (or slain) sticks out like a sore thumb. Combined with Isaiah's promise that prisoners will be set free, one may rightly wonder if battle is in view (and not, say, the peaceful healing ministry of Jesus). This possibility may become a probability, when we recall what else Qumran says about the appearance of the Messiah.

The final columns of our major copy of the *War Scroll* (i.e. 1QM) is in fragments. Among these fragments we find no reference to the Messiah, no mention of what action he will take when the great eschatological battle finally occurs. Nevertheless, the Messiah probably is alluded to, when Israel's faithful warriors are commanded to write "Israel" on the "shield of the Prince of the Whole Congregation" (1QM 5:1). In any event, our expectation that the Messiah will be present, leading the righteous, the "Sons of Light," into battle against the "Sons of Darkness," is confirmed by a surviving fragment of a related text recovered from cave 4.

38. Although it is debated, Dan 12:2 probably alludes to Isa 26:19. For more on this point, see Collins, *Daniel*, 392. O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 217, states: "it is impossible to tell which [text] came first." Perhaps not with certainty, but with the discovery of the Great Isaiah Scroll, whose reading at 26:19 agrees with the MT and whose date reaches back at least to the time of the composition of the book of Daniel, the priority of Isaiah is most probable, as Collins himself concludes.

This fragment offers an interpretation of Isa 10:34–11:5, which elsewhere among the Scrolls is understood to refer to the Davidic Messiah, who springs from the root of Jesse (see 4QIsaiah[a], a major commentary on Isa 10:22–11:5). The fragment reads:

> As in Isaiah the prophet, ["The thickets of the forest] will be fell[ed with an axe] [and Lebanon shall f]all [by a mighty one.] A shoot shall arise from the root of Jesse, [and a planting from his roots will bear fruit."]…the Branch of David. Then [all forces of Belial] shall be judged, [and the king of the Kittim shall stand for judgment] and the Leader of the congregation—the Bra[nch of David]—will have him put to death… Then all Israel shall come out with timbrel]s and dancers, and the [high] priest shall order [them to cleanse their bodies from the guilty blood of the c]orpse[s of] the Kittim. (4Q285 frag. 5, lines 1–6)

The fallen cedars of Lebanon (Isa 10:34) are understood to refer to the defeat of the Kittim (i.e. the Romans) at the hands of the Messiah, who in this commentary is said to be the "Branch of David" and the "Prince of the Congregation." The latter epithet harks back to 1QM 5:1, thus lending support to the conjecture that this figure truly is in reference to the Messiah. Elsewhere in the Scrolls the "Branch of David" is explicitly identified as the Messiah (see 4Q252 5:3). According to 4Q285 the Messiah kills the "king of the Kittim," that is, the Roman emperor. As best as we can tell from the fragmentary conclusion, while the women celebrate (a clear allusion to Miriam and the women of Israel who celebrated the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea; see Exod 15:20, "with timbrels and dancing"), the high priest takes charge of purifying the land (i.e. to avoid corpse impurity and in keeping with the command of Deut 21:22–23). We may have here a context for the Messiah's healing of the wounded.

With the battle won, the Messiah (or God, through his Messiah) will heal the wounded, raise the dead (from battle), release those imprisoned, and announce good news to the oppressed.[39] All of these actions mesh with the messianic actions described in 4Q285. If these two fragmentary Scrolls are related, the one (4Q285) describing the battle and the destruction of the enemy, and the other (4Q521) describing the healing of wounded Israelites and the resurrection of Israelites killed in battle, they may envision a purification and restoration of Israel following this great eschatological battle. If these texts are related as proposed here, Isa 26:19 has been placed into a new and intriguing light. 4Q521 may well understand Isa 26:19 and its prophecy of the dead being made alive as fulfilled

39. C. A. Evans, "Resurrection," 566–75.

in the aftermath of the great defeat of the Roman army.[40] While God through his Messiah heals the wounded and raises the dead, the priests purify the holy land by disposing of the corpses of the enemy.

In the *Thanksgiving Hymns* the Qumran community gives apocalyptic expression to the hope of resurrection:

> Then the sword of God shall hasten to the time of judgment and all the children of His truth shall awaken to put an end to [the children of] wickedness, and all the children of guilt shall be no more. The hero shall draw his bow, and the fortification shall open […] as an open country without end. The eternal gates shall open to bring out the weapons of war, and they shall be migh[t]y from one end of the world to the other… But there is no escape for the creatures of guilt, they shall be trampled down to destruction with no rem[nant. And there is no] hope in the abundance of…, and for all the heroes of war there is no refuge. (*vacat*) For [victory belongs] to God Most High […] Raise the ensign, O you who lie in the dust, and let the worms of the dead lift a banner for […] they cut […] (1QHa 14:32–37)

We cannot be certain, but the poetic words "Raise the ensign, O you who lie in the dust, and let the worms of the dead lift a banner" appear to allude to Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:2. If they do, then in at least one place the *Thanksgiving Hymns* have given expression to resurrection hope.

Five specific passages (four in this section and a fifth to be considered below) from the Qumran community apparently attest to their belief in resurrection. But not all agree. Nickelsburg doubts the presence of a resurrection belief at Qumran: "They make no reference to a persecution unto death that requires a post-mortem vindication."[41] In fact, he claims that "not a single passage can be interpreted with absolute certainty as a reference to resurrection or immortality."[42] But in what way, if at all, Nickelsburg has taken 4Q521 into account is not clear. Segal disagrees with Nickelsburg: "Dead Sea Scroll texts tell us that it was resurrection

40. This is not to say that 4Q521 is a sectarian text; most Qumran scholars doubt that it is. Nor is this to say that the eschatological scenarios envisioned in 4Q521 and the War Scrolls necessarily overlap to a great degree. All that is being proposed here is that the benefits envisioned by the author of 4Q521, which include healing the severely wounded and raising the dead, could have something to do with the aftermath of an eschatological battle, in which Israel's enemies have been destroyed.

41. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 205. One should also consult Émile Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, resurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien* (Paris: Gabalda, 1993). Puech rightly draws attention to 4Q521, which clearly anticipates resurrection. However, resurrection is not in view in 4Q246 2:4 "until the people of God arise [*qum*]."

42. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 179.

of the body that preserved Essene faith, a faith that was tested by martyrdom."[43] Josephus states that the Essenes (thought by most to be the group to whom the Dead Sea Scrolls belonged) held to a belief in the afterlife: "The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for" (*Ant.* 18.18). Scholars believe that Josephus has obfuscated the Essene belief, transforming the resurrection of the body into nothing more than the survival of the soul, perhaps as an accommodation to his Greco-Roman readers who would have had little interest in bodily resurrection ideas. Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude that the Qumran community believed in bodily resurrection. Resurrection played an important part in their apocalyptic eschatology, an eschatology in which the Messiah was expected to play a major role.

2. *Judgment Passages in Late Second Temple Literature*

It is understandable that the theme of eschatological judgment is prominent in Jewish literature in the light of the horrific persecution faced at this time. Sometimes there is mention of more than one judgment. In the *Apocalypse of the Weeks* (*1 En.* 91), there are different judgments for sinners and the world before the final judgment of angels. Mostly the Gentiles are judged, but sometimes even Israel falls under judgment, as seen, for instance, in *T. Benj.* 9:2. Sometimes special emphasis is given to the judgment of individuals (*2 En.* 65:6; 44:5). Not only nations and individuals but also angels and demons will be judged. This is especially stressed in the *Book of the Watchers* in *1 Enoch* where the judgment of the fallen angels is anticipated (*1 En.* 1:9, 12; cf. Jude 6; 1 Pet 3:19).

In most cases, individuals are judged according to their deeds, so that the judgment is not an emotional or irrational event. It has a moral basis. The Gentiles are judged because they disregarded God and his commandments. Yet in some writings the judgment of the Gentiles comes close to a nationalistic one: they are judged, not because they have sinned, but because they are not part of Israel.

43. Segal, *Life after Death*, 382.

3. *Prominent Secondary Sources Representing Late Second Temple Judaism*

Other Jewish religious segments begin to formulate strong beliefs relating to resurrection in the time prior to the New Testament. Josephus is a reliable secondary source on the diversity of Jewish beliefs in the inter-testamental period. All that is known about the Sadducees can be ascertained through Josephus, the New Testament,[44] and the Mishnah. Josephus claims first-hand acquaintance with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes:

> And when I was about sixteen years old, I had a mind to make trial of the several sects that were among us. These sects are three: The first is that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes, as we have frequently told you; for I thought that by this means I might, choose the best, if I were once acquainted with them all; so I contented myself with hard fare, and underwent great difficulties and went through them all. Nor did I content myself with these trials only; but when I was informed that one, whose name was Banus, lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, both by night and by day, in order to preserve his chastity, I imitated him in those things, and continued with him three years. So when I had accomplished my desires, I returned back to the city, being now nineteen years old, and began to conduct myself according to the rules of the sect of the Pharisees, which is of kin to the sect of the Stoics, as the Greeks call them. (*Life* 10–12)

Perhaps Josephus' decision to align with the Pharisees informed his general disdain for the Sadducees in his writings. In Josephus' dozen or so references[45] to the Sadducees, they are said to be faithful to their interpretation of the Torah (relating to the afterlife), though they were not known as pious or generous. Josephus seems to indicate that they based their rejection of the resurrection on their understanding of the *Torah*:

> But the doctrine of the Sadducees is this: That souls die with the bodies; nor do they regard the observation of anything besides what the law enjoins them; for they think it an instance of virtue to dispute with those teachers of philosophy whom they frequent. (*Life* 18.16)

44. See Mark 12:18; Matt 22:23; Luke 20:27; Acts 4:1–2; 23:8.

45. There are twelve references to the Sadducees in Josephus and twelve more in the New Testament.

Furthermore, Josephus claimed that the Sadducees did not believe in any post-mortem existence or punitive judgment:

> And they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. (*J.W.* 2.165)

Segal has described the Sadducean view by comparing it with the Freudian characterization of facing death heroically and without illusion.[46] The Sadducees believed they were purists when it came to their afterlife beliefs, adhering to their understanding of the *Torah*. The perspective of the Sadducees contributed to what Josephus refers to as "wild living" and "barbarous" conversation (*J.W.* 2.166). Josephus attributed an almost deistic view of God to the Sadducees: "But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil" (*J.W.* 2.164).

Josephus records that the Pharisees believed that the human soul is imperishable and "passes into another body" (*J.W.* 2.163). It is probable that Josephus is referring to resurrection (cf. *J.W.* 3.374). Craig A. Evans describes the emergence of a Pharisaic resurrection tradition:

> The Pharisaic belief in the resurrection becomes standard eschatology in the rabbinic tradition. Its earliest witness is preserved in the Mishnah, oral law codified and published by Rabbi Judah the Prince in the early third century CE. The phrase "resurrection of the dead" becomes idiomatic (cf. *m. 'Abot* 4:22; *Berakot* 5:2; *Sanhedrin* 10:1; *Sota* 9:15). Failure to believe in the resurrection is heresy and may result in failure to obtain life in the world to come.[47]

Another passage with a limited eschatology in its original setting is Ezek 37:12. It is a limited eschatology in the sense that it was interpreted originally as a national restoration of Israel to its homeland. However, Ezek 37:12 becomes fully eschatologized in the rabbinic writings, which render this verse as prescribing a resurrection of the dead occurring in the land of Israel.[48] Samson Levey comments, "The resurrection of the dead will take place in the land of Israel. The deserving who are buried elsewhere (outside the land) God will transport to the land of Israel by means of underground tunnels."[49] Levey then cites a text in the rabbinic

46. Ibid., 96.
47. C. A. Evans, "Resurrection," 566–75.
48. Fully "eschatologized" is an etic term.
49. Samson H. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (ArBib 13; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 105.

Midrash, *Gen. Rab.* 96.5 (ca. 450 CE), which comments on why Jacob desired his bones to be taken back to Israel for burial (*Gen. Rab.* 96.5 [on Gen 47:30]):[50]

> The question is raised, "why were the patriarchs so anxious for burial in the land of Israel?"…this teaches that the earth will become perforated as with caves, and the righteous will roll along them like gourds and immediately they reach the land of Israel and become alive. Thus, it says, "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live." (Ezek 37:14)
>
> And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favour in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place." He answered, "I will do as you have said." (Gen 47:29–30)

This text (Gen 47:29–30) is interpreted along with Ezek 37:12:

> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD. (Ezek 37:12–14)

These traditions influence current burial practices and post-mortem beliefs among pious Jews.[51] The interpretive tradition ranges from the national restoration to a personal eschatological resurrection. It is interesting to note how the rabbinic writings renew the importance of "the land" with their resurrection eschatology in later texts.

50. *Genesis Rabbah* falls outside the range of the intertestamental period, but it is illustrative of how resurrection traditions carry on in Judaism through the rabbis.

51. This is why pious Jews believe God will see to it that the bones of the righteous will be transported to Israel so that they may be resurrected. Furthermore, that is why pious Jews have their bones taken to Israel for burial to this day adorning the Mount of Olives. Today there are an estimated 150,000 thes on the Mount of Olives. These Jews believe they will be the first to be resurrected when the Messiah comes and enters Jerusalem through the Golden (eastern) Gate (cf. Ezek 46:1–2, 12).

4. *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have argued that late Second Temple literature attests resurrection beliefs more explicitly and in much great detail than did the older literature of the Hebrew Bible and the recurring theme, characteristic of literature at this time, is that those who die innocently deserve to live again. I have suggested that the belief in life-after-death in Jewish literature developed most prominently in the intertestamental period as an answer to a crisis in which Judaism faced social upheaval and savage reprisals. The perplexing theological question of *Torah*-obedient Jews suffering martyrdom provided the social context for writings to answer the justifiable questions of victims.

My analysis of the relevant literature reveals the diversity of ideas relating to resurrection and afterlife. Although there is clearly no uniformity to these ideas, one may discern a core of resurrection beliefs. Of course, one readily notices that many of these Jewish writings centre on the theme of God avenging his people. Some of these writings speak of bodily resurrection to judge the wicked and to reward the righteous. In these writings we read of transfigured bodies more glorious than the angels and we read of philosophical discussions that focus on the immortality of the soul. The social context was a time in which the Jews were constantly subjected to growing and intense persecution. The expressions in these varied writings brought hope. It has been suggested that martyrology, in its pre-Christian form, emerged as a new genre. Again and again, through their writings, the faithful expressed their belief in the on-going presence of God in the midst of their crisis by proclaiming the resurrection of the dead.

I also observed the specific link between the advent of the awaited Messiah and the resurrection of the dead, as attested in 4Q521. Although this text is not sectarian and therefore does not necessarily reflect the eschatology of the Essenes, it nonetheless testifies to an important strain of thinking in circulation among Palestinian Jews in the generation before Jesus and his followers. In an important sense, this text prepares us for the ministry of Jesus, his miracles, including healing and resuscitations, and how his followers would interpret his resurrection in the aftermath of Easter.

It has been acknowledged that belief regarding eternal life is not emphasized in Hebrew Scriptures. For much of their history, the Israelites did not pursue this topic, at least so far as we can determine. However, this relative non-interest did not prevent later Jewish writers from giving expression to new ideas to meet the needs and answer the questions of the people. As time passed, concepts like immortality, resurrection, and

eternal judgment played an important role in the eschatological expectations of most Jewish groups. What is remarkable is the development of a belief in resurrection from almost no precedent or antecedent in early Jewish thought to a well-formed theology by the time a Jew named Jesus appeared on the scene, declaring that he is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).

Chapter 6

Resurrection in New Testament Texts: From Resuscitation to Resurrection

What happened at Easter overwhelmed the followers of Jesus to such an extent that it dominated their thought and became the very centre of their preaching.[1] Indeed, the message that Jesus himself had proclaimed was subordinated to the proclamation of his resurrection.[2] What is striking about Christian texts, which reflect to one degree or another late Second Temple ideas, is that a surprisingly well-formed theology of bodily resurrection emerges as the key conviction that gave rise to Christian faith. The Christian doctrine of resurrection, attested throughout the New Testament, is rooted in Judaism, probably exclusively. Craig Evans has observed:

> The idea of resurrection, whereby the dead are restored to life (and by this is meant a life superior to the previous life and almost always understood as everlasting life), appears to be distinctive of early Judaism and Christianity.

1. Gerhard Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1959), 25. For scholarly discussion of resurrection theology and ideas in the New Testament and its environment, see C. F. D. Moule (ed.), *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1968); C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*; R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985); idem, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990); Longenecker (ed.), *Life in the Face of Death*; Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*; Dale C. Allison Jr., *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005); Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010); Bryan, *Resurrection of the Messiah*. The literature treating the resurrection is enormous.

2. This shift in focus gave rise to the theological debate centred on the problem of how to reckon with the early Church's proclamation of the proclaimer.

> Approximate parallels have been put forward, but on closer examination they really are not the same.[3]

N. T. Wright underscores this point:

> The immediate conclusion is clear. Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was known to be false. Many believed that the dead were non-existent; outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection.[4]

According to the earliest gospels Jesus assumed and taught an eschatological doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, an event whereby the wicked are judged and the righteous are rewarded with eternal life.[5] A specific resurrection theology is articulated from the outset in the earliest Christian documents. We have traced the emergence of primitive afterlife

3. C. A. Evans, "Resurrection," 566. For a recent challenge to the oft-heard claim that Persian ideas deeply influenced inter-testamental Judaism (and therefore early Christian theology also), see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Did Persian Zoroastrianism Influence Judaism?," in D. I. Block et al. (eds.), *Israel: Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention?* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 282–97. Theories that ancient Near Eastern religions of dying and rising gods shaped early Christian thinking are also unpersuasive. On this point, see A. D. Nock, "Greek Novels and Egyptian Religion," in Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, vol. 1 (ed. Z. Stewart; Oxford: Clarendon Press; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 169–75; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 1–10. In his essay Nock refutes, among other things, Karl Kerényi's suggestion that the Christian message was influenced by pagan myths about crucified gods. To cite but one snippet of his review: "Now if Osiris had been crucified this would be a point in favour of the thesis. But he was not" (p. 170). Nock's essay originally appeared in *Gnomon* 4 (1928): 485–92, as a review of Kerényi's book, *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927). To this important correction adds Hengel: "Attis and Adonis were killed by a wild boar, Osiris was torn to pieces by Typhon-Seth and Dionysus-Zagreus by the Titans. Heracles alone of the 'Greeks' voluntarily immolated himself on Mount Oeta" (*Crucifixion*, 5).

4. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 35. Wright replies to Stanley E. Porter, "Resurrection, the Greeks and the New Testament," in Porter, Hayes, and Tombs (eds.), *Resurrection*, 52–81. Porter explores what evidence there is of Greco-Roman beliefs about the afterlife. Wright notes that none of it approaches the Jewish understanding of resurrection. In fairness to Porter, his principal point was to note that not all afterlife ideas in Greek thought were purely spiritual.

5. See Mark 12:18–27 and parallels. The authenticity of this tradition is hardly doubted. See Grant R. Osborne, "Resurrection," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 673.

beliefs in the Hebrew Bible to their explicit expressions, including credal statements, of resurrection in the New Testament writings. The Pauline corpus details the future resurrected body and the miraculous signs accompanying the final resurrection. The Pauline written material is also the earliest in the Christian movement, and like the Danielic resurrection passage, in a sense serves as a chronological marker as to when the new movement articulated in a succinct manner its resurrection theology. However, it is important to note that nowhere in the New Testament is the actual resurrection event itself described. Christian resurrection traditions begin with an empty tomb and appearances, not with the details of how the resurrected Jesus came out of that tomb. Notwithstanding, nearly all of the New Testament books allude to Jesus' resurrection and/or his followers presuppose a future resurrection in a glorified body.

1. *Jesus and Resurrection*

Jesus followed in the tradition expanding from Daniel to the Pharisees, teaching that there would be a two-fold resurrection: the righteous to their reward and the wicked to their judgment. Jesus not only believed in resurrection (Mark 9:31) but also he evidently commanded his disciples, whom he sent out as apostles, to proclaim the rule of God and to "raise the dead" (cf. Matt 10:8), as adumbrations of the resurrection anticipated in the last age. The New Testament writers allude to, cite, reinterpret, and develop Jewish texts in the light of eschatological beliefs set in motion after Jesus' resurrection.

The gospel writers record Jesus' belief in the resurrection in two areas, which go hand-in-hand but are not the same. Firstly, resurrection is an eschatological teaching; it is an act of God some time in the future. Jesus' citation of Exod 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," adding his interpretation, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong" (Mark 12:18–27; Matt 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40), in reply to the Sadducees, demonstrates his belief in the resurrection.[6] According to Jesus, Abraham continues to exist and to enjoy the blessings of God's covenant. From Jesus' perspective,

6. For detailed discussion of Jesus' Kingdom Proclamation, see Jeremiah J. Johnston and C. A. Evans, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," in S. E. Balentine et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Theology* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2:cols. 1–9; "Kingdom of God," in P. J. J. van Geest, B. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, and D. Hunter (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); as well as "Resurrection," in R. Brawley (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Ethics* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2:cols. 208–12.

Abraham would eventually be raised from the dead. The Lukan account of this presents an interesting redactional change. The teachers of the Law (scribes) actually praise Jesus for his answer to the Sadducees, "Then some of the scribes answered, 'Teacher, you have spoken well'" (Luke 20:39). It is perhaps the only passage in which the scribes actually admire or approve of Jesus and his teachings. Matthean redaction (Matt 22:33) states that the "crowds" (ὄχλοι) "were astonished" (ἐξεπλήσσοντο). The reactions by the crowds and the scribes, as recorded by the gospel writers, show something of the intrigue of resurrection traditions in the first century CE.[7]

Secondly, Jesus' belief in resurrection can be observed in the canonical Gospels by the miracles he performs by resuscitation(s). They are related eschatological examples of the final defeat of death. Resuscitations were an aspect of Jesus' ministry of raising up the "recently deceased" that foreshadowed the future resurrections on the day of judgment as an eschatological event. Jesus authorized his disciples to preach the good news of the reign of God and, among other things, to "raise the dead" (νεκροὺς ἐγείρετε, Matt 10:8). In his reply to the imprisoned John, Jesus says, "the dead are raised up" (νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22). In addition to these summary statements the New Testament gospels narrate three specific stories of people raised from the dead by Jesus. In one story Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue, whose daughter died only moments before Jesus arrived (Mark 5:21–43; Matt 9:18–26; Luke 8:40–56). The story's details may suggest first-hand eyewitness testimony, from the desperation of the father and the sad report that reached him, "Your daughter has died. Why trouble the Teacher any further?," to the mocking laughter in response to Jesus' words, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." The very Aramaic words that Jesus uttered remained fixed in the tradition: *talitha*, *cum* ("Little girl, arise"). The appearance of the name Jairus, along with his identification with respect to the local synagogue (probably the one at Capernaum), probably points to the memory of a specific episode in the ministry of Jesus.

In the second story Jesus raises up the only son of a widow (Luke 7:11–17). Jesus encounters the funeral party as it leaves the village of

7. For discussion of Mark 12:18–27, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 469–75; for Matt 22:23–33, see John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Bletchley: Paternoster Press, 2005), 899–907; for Luke 20:27–40, see Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids. MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 717–23.

Nain, on its way to the place of burial. The boy has died that very day or perhaps the previous evening. A number of distinctive details are recalled, such as the name of the village, the woman being a widow, the deceased boy her only son, Jesus' touching the bier, the stopping of the bearers, and the startling movement of the deceased, who is said to have "sat up." Again we have vivid details that probably derive from eyewitness memory.

The third resuscitation story is the well-known raising of Lazarus, arguably the most stunning miracle story in the Jesus tradition. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, part of a family that lived in Bethany, in the vicinity of Jerusalem (John 11:1–44). We are told that Lazarus had been ill, had finally died, and that four days after his death Jesus finally arrived. The raising of Lazarus is by far the most dramatic resuscitation story in the gospels. In contrast to the others who died and then minutes or at most hours later were raised up, Lazarus has been dead for four days. He has been wrapped and placed in the family tomb. The seven-day primary funeral, held at the graveside, is more than half completed. Jesus arrives, requests that the stone be removed, and is told that there will be a stench (11:39). According to Jewish traditions, the spirit of the deceased lingers in the vicinity of the corpse for three days and then departs on the fourth day (see *Lev. Rab.* 18.1 [on Lev 15:1–2]; *Qoh. Rab.* 12:6 §1). From the Jewish perspective of late antiquity, Lazarus is as dead as one can get. Nothing less than "resurrection," in its eschatological sense, can bring him back.[8] His sisters believe this; but as far as this life is concerned, they will never see their brother again. Jesus then commands, "Lazarus, come forth [δεῦρο ἔξω]!" (11:43), and "he who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings" (v. 44). The story is remarkable.

In all three of these stories we find what appear to be traces of eyewitness memory, the recollection of names, places, unusual and vivid details, and even some of Jesus' words. Twice we hear Jesus command the deceased: "Arise," either in Greek (as in Luke 7:14) or in Aramaic, as in Mark 5:41.[9] The distinctive words of Jesus are remembered in whatever language they happen to be transmitted.

8. Which is why in this context the Johannine Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life [ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή]" (John 11:25). The raising up of Lazarus is so beyond the "norm" (i.e. from the perspective of Jesus' contemporaries), that in some sense it warrants being regarded as resurrection.

9. Luke's Greek ἐγέρθητι is the precise equivalent of Mark's Aramaic κουμ (= קום). Elsewhere in Luke the passive form of the verb recalls other passages where the dead are raised up (e.g. Luke 7:22; 9:7, 22; 20:37), including Jesus himself (24:6, 34).

What is interesting is that in all three examples specific details are retained: in the first story the name and position of Jairus, in the second story the name of the village and the facts that the woman was a widow and that the dead boy was her only son, and in the third story the names of the deceased and his sisters, as well as how long he had been dead, and the name of their village. Clearly many details, as well as the resuscitations themselves, were firmly embedded in the collective memory of Jesus' following.

I emphasize these remarkable stories because it is probable that they influenced the way the followers of Jesus interpreted the Easter event. From our point of view, privileged with hindsight, we may view these miraculous resuscitations as adumbrations of the resurrection of Jesus and of the future resurrection of his followers. But from the point of view of those who encountered the risen Jesus, with no well-established, uniform doctrine of resurrection before them, the miraculous resuscitations very probably defined aspects of Jesus' resurrection. I do not see how it could have been otherwise. Perhaps it is not coincidence that the same language is used in reference to those Jesus raised up, as well as in reference to his own resurrection.

A quick survey of the relevant vocabulary readily shows this to be the case. The verb ἐγείρω appears in Matt 10:8; 11:5; Luke 7:22 (in general reference), in Mark 5:41 (in reference to the daughter of Jairus), in Mark 6:14, 16 (in reference to John the Baptist), in Luke 7:14 (in reference to the young man), in Mark 12:26 (in reference to general resurrection), in John 12:1, 9, 17 (in reference to Lazarus) in Mark 14:28; Luke 9:22 (in Jesus' reference to himself), in Mark 16:6 (in reference to Jesus) and in Luke 24:6, 34 (in reference to the resurrection of Jesus). The verb ἀνίστημι appears in Mark 5:42 (in reference to the daughter of Jairus), in Luke 9:8 (in reference to an eschatological prophet), in Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34 (in Jesus' passion predictions), in Mark 12:25 (in reference to the general resurrection), in Luke 16:31 (in a hypothetical instance), in Luke 24:7 (in reference to the risen Jesus). We see the same usage in most of the other writings of the New Testament.

Resurrection deeds were also understood to possess messianic significance. We see this in Jesus' response to John's question ("Are you the One who is coming?") and in the way the Matthean evangelist introduced the exchange: "Now when John heard in prison about the works *of the Messiah*" (Matt 11:2, emphasis added). Jesus' reply, in which he alludes to healing, raising the dead, and proclaiming goods news to the oppressed, take place with the appearance of God's Messiah. This remarkable saying

(Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22) not only affirms Jesus' belief in resurrection but confirms his own messianic role in it.[10]

Consequently, the language of resurrection, not to mention deeds that Jesus and his contemporaries viewed as actual instances of "being raised up" (whether resuscitation or "resurrection"), almost certainly charged the disciples prior to Easter with ideas that came into play on Easter and the days that followed. In what ways they made distinctions between these events—especially in comparison with the Easter event itself—is not easy to determine, but it is a question that must be addressed.

2. *Resurrection and People Who Die Twice?*

A survey of the hundreds of available published works on the subject of resurrection, immortality, and eternal life in the New Testament can become frustrating when one considers the variety of terms and their not always clear and consistent usage. A return from death has been described as rebirth, resurrection, resuscitation, reanimation, and revivification. What do these terms describe? Was Jesus revived or was he resuscitated or resurrected? There is a need for clarification. This is where emic and etic categories are helpful when approaching afterlife themes within the text of the New Testament. In this study, I will use etic terminology to create a distinction between two types of experiences in rising from the dead. I will refer to resurrection and resuscitation from a modern perspective. To talk about resurrection is to describe someone who is raised from the dead, not to die again, whereas resuscitation involves one who is brought back from the dead but will die again at some future point.

10. For recent studies of this important exchange, which ably takes into account the significance of 4Q521, see Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Die Werke des eschatologischen Freudenboten (4Q521 und die Jesusüberlieferung)," in C. M. Tuckett (ed.), *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (BETL 131; Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1997), 637–46; Hans Kvalbein, "The Wonders of the End-Time: Metaphoric Language in 4Q521 and the Interpretation of Matthew 11.5 par.," *JSP* 18 (1998): 87–110; Michael Labahn, "The Significance of Signs in Luke 7:22–23 in the Light of Isaiah 61 and the *Messianic Apocalypse*," in C. A. Evans (ed.), *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 146–68; Michael Becker, "Der 'messianische Apokalypse' 4Q521 und der Interpretationsrahmen der Taten Jesu," in M. Becker and J. Frey (eds.), *Apokalyptik und Qumran* (Einblicke 10; Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2007), 237–303. It has become evident, in the light of the remarkable parallels between Jesus' reply to John and what we find in 4Q521, that the Matthean evangelist rightly recognized the eschatological and messianic import of both John's question and Jesus' response.

In the ancient world it is not evident how much people would have distinguished resurrection terminology. The original texts do not differentiate between resurrection and resuscitation nomenclature. Within their *Sitz im Leben*, the friends of Jesus, having experienced the decay and stench of Lazarus, found him raised, walking, talking and eating in their midst (John 11:1–44; 12:1–2). How would they have interpreted this remarkable event? As resurrection or as resuscitation? Abandonment from the grave was normally described by two Greek words in the New Testament (ἀνάστασις, lit. "to stand up," and ἐγείρω, "to rise, to have risen"), but the authors usually did not differentiate as to the circumstances of the resurrection.[11]

In view of first-century Jewish expectations, resurrection did not mean simply a resuscitation of an individual corpse. The expectation of resurrection had in view an immortal body, whereas a resuscitation had in view a mortal body (cf. 1 Cor 15:53). A resuscitation, such as that of the widow of Nain's son, could point to the general resurrection as an example, but it was only that—an example. Her son would die again. Lazarus would die again. Jairus' daughter would die again.

The author of Revelation quotes the words of the resurrected Jesus and the distinction is clear in that Jesus' resurrected body will never die again: καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (lit. "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore," Rev 1:18). The Gospel of Luke records a discourse of Jesus' description of the resurrection where it is explicitly stated: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται (lit. "for they cannot die anymore," Luke 20:36). The resurrected body is more intricately upgraded in that the resurrected one lives on, no longer subject to disease, decay, and death. This same body is transformed into a glorified body, on which death can make no impact. Further, resurrection bodies manifest some otherworldly qualities, not inherent in mortal bodies or resuscitated ones, such as the ability to appear and disappear from sight immediately: αὐτὸς ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ' αὐτῶν ("he vanished from their sight," Luke 24:31), or to get inside a closed room:

> Οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.

11. According to Zodhiates, of the 42 times in the New Testament that the word ἀνάστασις occurs, with the exception of Luke 2:34, it always means the resurrection of the body. See Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994), *ad loc*.

> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19).

These etic critical insights and distinctions (resuscitation compared with resurrection) allow precision to be brought to the examination of afterlife beliefs within the New Testament.

3. *John the Baptist Resurrected?*

The Gospel writers are careful to record that the afterlife belief in bodily resurrection was not only among the pious or the eccentric of the day. Even Herod Antipas had heard about Jesus and wondered if Jesus was the beheaded John the Baptist raised (ἠγέρθη) from the dead (Mark 6:16; Matt 14:1–12; cf. Luke 9:7–9).[12] When John the Baptist criticized Herod for marrying his brother's wife, it set in motion a chain of events that led to Herod's imprisoning and eventually killing him (Mark 6:17–29), after which Herod was haunted by a guilty conscience (Mark 6:14–16). Voices in Palestine were likening Jesus' miraculous works with a vindicated and resuscitated martyr John the Baptist:

> Ἤκουσεν δὲ Ἡρῴδης ὁ τετραάρχης τὰ γινόμενα πάντα καὶ διηπόρει διὰ τὸ λέγεσθαι ὑπό τινων ὅτι Ἰωάννης ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν,[8] ὑπό τινων δὲ ὅτι Ἠλίας ἐφάνη, ἄλλων δὲ ὅτι προφήτης τις τῶν ἀρχαίων ἀνέστη.
>
> Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen. (Luke 9:7–8)

Herod "heard of it (Jesus' ministry), for Jesus' name had become known" (φανερὸν[13] γὰρ ἐγένετο τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, Mark 6:14). Lukan redaction again provides another perspective on this rivalry when Jesus seemingly dismisses the tetrarch with words bordering on contempt, "Herod…that fox," and then proclaims another resurrection phenomenon, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course" (Luke 13:32; cf. Luke 9:22). For the readers of

12. Herod Antipas, seventh son and one of three surviving sons of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BCE–39 CE), serving as administrator under Rome. He lost his throne in 39 CE after trying to gain complete sovereignty.

13. φανερός, -α, -ον, meaning "known, evident, plain, visible" (ἔλθῃ εἰς φανερόν: "be brought out into the open"; Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17).

Luke's Gospel the "third day" will resonate with Jesus' passion predictions. As Luke portrays Herod Antipas, it is possible that Herod might have believed in a resurrection of some kind. In any case, Herod's anxiety testifies to his great respect for the power of Jesus.[14]

The story of John and Herod's fear suggests that resurrection beliefs were widespread in first-century Jewish tradition. Indeed, Sadducean scepticism (Mark 12:18–27) itself attests the currency of resurrection beliefs. Thus, it should not be a surprise that a fully formed resurrection theology could emerge within the New Testament from a first century CE Jewish context. The evidence in the two just-mentioned reasons for Jesus' belief in his own resurrection points to the rising popularity of Jesus, his teaching of eschatological resurrection, and his resuscitation adumbrations, which indicate why his personal resurrection becomes the focal point for Christian belief as the "first fruits." 1 Corinthians, which most scholars believe is the earliest written Christian source for Jesus' resurrection, states:

> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (1 Cor 15:22–24)

Paul's remarkable confession is hardly innovative; rather, it rests on a firm foundation of early Christian preaching and an important body of scriptural testimony.

4. *New Testament Passages that Re-Work Hebrew Bible Passages*

Further passages in the New Testament provide an insight as to how Christian thinkers of the first century re-worked Jewish scriptures in an evolving resurrection tradition. Hebrew Bible passages which appear to be significant, based on citations or allusions for clarifying the perspectives on resurrection held by the New Testament authors, include Dan 12:2–3; Isa 26:19; Isa 61; Ezek 37:14; Hos 6:2 (esp. as understood in the Aramaic) and Lev 18:5 (again, esp. as understood in the Aramaic).[15] Beyond specific citations and allusions, there were moments when Jesus used typology and analogy in referring to his coming resurrection, "Destroy this temple

14. On this point, see R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 303–4.

15. We may have yet another example, which appeals to the sign of Jonah. This could be seen as a Matthean redaction and theology.

and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).[16] Jesus appeared to be operating in a world where at least some factions of Judaism argued strongly for a belief in resurrection.

a. *Leviticus 18:5*

Jesus alluded to a *Torah* passage (Lev 18:5) in Luke 10:25–29, "You have answered correctly; 'do this, and you will live'," in answering the lawyer's question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"[17] Did Jesus have any basis for using this *Torah* passage as a proof text for resurrection? After all, the Hebrew text seems to be promising no more than life in the Promised Land, that is, in Israel, if God's commandments are obeyed. Yet, Jesus alluded to Lev 18:5 in reference to "eternal life." As it so happens, evidence from the first century CE confirms that Jesus' appeal to Lev 18:5 was fully appropriate and would indeed have provided the lawyer with an answer to his question.

The *Targum* (Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible) was developing in the Synagogue in the time of Jesus, though the "official" Targums would not be committed to writing more than one century after the time of Jesus. The Aramaic rendering of Lev 18:5 reads "…do this and you will live *in the life to come*" (the Aramaic addition placed in italics). The Aramaic paraphrase makes it clear that this was not Jesus' idiosyncratic interpretation of Lev 18:5. In the time of Jesus the Qumran community interpreted the tradition similarly, as attested by the *Cairo Damascus Document*. This *Targumic* interpretation of Lev 18:5 is attested in the much earlier CD 3:15b–20a. The passage reads:

> The desires of His will, "which Man should do and so have life in them," He opened up to them. So they "dug a well," yielding much water. Those who reject this water He will not allow to live. And although they had wallowed in the sin of humanity and in impure ways and said, "Surely this is our business," God in His mysterious ways atoned for their iniquity and forgave their transgression. So He built for them a faithful house in Israel, like none that had ever appeared before; and even at this day, "those who do it shall receive everlasting life."

16. Typology: events in the past foreshadow events in the future (e.g. Jonah, Jewish Temple).

17. To most Christians/Gentiles the book of Leviticus is irrelevant. Beyond Lev 19:18b, "love your neighbour as yourself," there is little interest. Yet this book displays a unique link in the resurrection tradition strand. Lev 18:5 is also alluded to in James. Faith is not in platitudes. It is in helping the widow and the poor.

The passage from Leviticus is quoted in lines 15a–16a and then is repeated in an interpretive fashion in the middle of line 20: "those who do it shall receive everlasting life." *Cairo Damascus Document*'s "everlasting life" approximates the later *Targum*'s "life to come."

The *Targum* and the *Cairo Damascus Document* attest the development of resurrection interpretations involving the Hebrew Bible passage used by Jesus. We have here another example of Jesus' teaching of a future eschatological resurrection. It is also further evidence that the belief in resurrection was held among divergent Jewish communities in the first century (e.g. Qumran community, Pharisees, followers of Jesus, and probably most of the common people). Leviticus 18:5 had taken on new meaning by the time of the first century CE, if not earlier.

The MT of Lev 18:5 reads:

ושמרתם את־חקתי ואת־משפטי אשר יעשׂה אתם האדם וחי בהם אני יהוה

You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.[18]

The *Targum* reads:

ותיטרון ית קימי וית דיני דאם יעביד יתהון אנשא ייחי בהון בחיי עלמא אנא יוי

And you shall keep my covenants and my laws that if a person does them, he shall live by them in eternal life. I am the Lord.

The Cairo Damascus Document 3:15b–20a reads:

15 וחפצי רצונו אשר יעשה
16 האדם וחיה בהם [ ] פתח לפניהם ויחפרו באר למים רבים
17 ומואסיהם לא יחיה והם התגוללו ב פשע אנוש ובדרכי נדה
18 ויאמרו כי לנו היא ואל ברזי פלאו כפר בעד עינם וישא לפשעם
19 ויבן להם בית נאמן בישראל אשל לא עמד כמהו למלפנים ועד
20 הנה המחזיקים בו לחיי נצח וכל כבוד אדם להם הוא כאשר

(For translation, see above.)

18. The MT and LXX have a very similar reading: LXX Lev 18:5, καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν (lit. "So you shall keep all my ordinances, and all my judgments, and do them; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord your God").

b. *Daniel 12:2*

Daniel 12:2 provides the first explicit passage in the Hebrew Bible that envisages individual resurrection. It is also alluded to in Rev 20:11–15. This passage states that the last group to be raised will include the wicked dead of all time and they will be raised at the end of the millennial kingdom to stand before the Great White Throne in a judgment that will sentence all of them to the lake of fire. The shadow of Dan 12:2 falls over most of the New Testament's enemies as several of the New Testament authors allude to this final reckoning for evildoers. Revelation describes a millennial reign on earth where the righteous are resurrected and living again.

Segal has described resurrection in the Judeo-Christian motif as providing a way to balance the equation of divine retribution.[19] Enemies of Jesus became enemies of his followers, many of whom were martyred. The resurrection of the body gave transcendent worth to the death of the martyrs by stating that God would make good on his covenantal promises to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.[20] Eternal retribution, as part of the resurrection scenario, seems to have originated with Dan 12:2:

> καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ἀναστήσονται, οἱ μὲν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ εἰς ὀνειδισμόν, οἱ δὲ εἰς διασποράν καὶ αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον.
>
> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.[21]

19. Segal, *Life after Death*, 394.

20. Ibid., 394.

21. For comparison of Dan 12:2 in the MT and the Greek recensions, see Chapter 4. The idea of judgment, even damnation, of the wicked can be traced to texts much older than Dan 12, of course. In various ways the classical prophets spoke of the judgment of the wicked and apostate. One immediately thinks of the rather grim concluding verse of Isaiah: "And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh" (66:24). This verse came to be understood in reference to the eternal damnation of the wicked, as we see in the Aramaic paraphrase, which inserts reference to Gehenna, and in the words of Jesus, in which he warns: "…it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, [48] where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47–48). Jesus has alluded to Isa 66:24 as refracted through the lens of the Aramaic. The idea that Isa 66:24 referred to eternal judgment is attested by Judith, an apocryphal work likely composed near the end of the second century BCE: "Woe to the nations that rise up against my people! The Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment; fire and worms he will give to their flesh; they shall weep in pain forever" (16:17). The Isaianic passage is alluded to a bit

A number of New Testament passages appear to allude to this passage in describing the day when all will give an account of themselves to God. Here are a few examples:

> μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ἐν ᾗ πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκπορεύσονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως.
>
> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28–29)

> ἐλπίδα ἔχων εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἣν καὶ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι προσδέχονται, ἀνάστασιν μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι δικαίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων.
>
> having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. (Acts 24:15)

> καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾅδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾅδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὑρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.
>
> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:13–15)

Late Second Temple literature and the writings of the New Testament affirm that God is also the judge of the wicked. The followers of Jesus accepted the agent of God's judgment as "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13), whom they identified with Jesus (John 5:22, 27). The reality of a final judgment was an important part of early Christian resurrection theology. A belief in a future judgment made the followers of Jesus

earlier in Yeshua ben Sira, whose work was composed ca. 180 BCE: "Humble yourself greatly, for the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms" (Sir 7:17). It is probable that Isa 66:24 and its subsequent history of interpretation contributed to the thought to which Dan 12:2 gives expression. What makes Dan 12:2 distinctive is the explicit link between resurrection and judgment. For later examples of Jewish interpretation, in which Isa 66:24 is linked to eternal judgment, see *t. Ber.* 5.31; *t. Sanh.* 13.5; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 10.4; and *Midr. Pss.* 12.5 (on Ps 12:8). For early Christian examples, outside the New Testament, see *2 Clem.* 7:6; 17:5.

conscious of God's demands and became a factor in encouraging the purity of life and vigour in holiness (1 Cor 15:29–34).

c. *Hosea 6:2*

In the eighth century BCE the prophet Hosea consoled a defeated Northern Kingdom with the promise that God would restore the nation, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him" (Hos 6:2). In subsequent interpretations, the prophecy came to be understood in reference to resurrection. This is seen explicitly in the Aramaic paraphrase (i.e. the Targum), in which it is understood that the prophecy refers to the general resurrection at the end of time (see Chapter 4). Jesus was evidently familiar with this interpretation but he applied it to his own resurrection.

We hear the prophecy echoed in Jesus' predictions of suffering: "The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise" (Mark 9:31).[22] Jesus' application of the prophecy to himself, so far as we know, is distinctive. In effect, Jesus "Messianizes" this passage. Hosea's prepositions מן/"after" (first clause) and ב/"on" (second clause) probably account for the variations in Jesus' passion predictions: μετά/"after" in Mark (8:31; 9:31; 10:34); ἀπό/"on" in Matthew (16:21; 17:23; 20:19), Luke (9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 46; Acts 10:40), and Paul (1 Cor 15:4). The allusions in the comparative charts of this text present the different contributions to the tradition. The interpretive history of this verse is remarkable. We begin with Hosea's prophecy of national restoration, move to the Aramaic prophecy of general resurrection, and end with Jesus' reference to himself. Seen in the light of Hosea and its interpretive history, Jesus becomes, in the words of Paul, the "first fruits" of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20, 23). Craig Evans has analysed the contribution of the Aramaic paraphrase:

> The probability that Jesus alluded to the phrase, "on the third day he will raise us up," in his passion prediction is increased somewhat when we consider the Aramaic paraphrase found in the *Targum*: ביום אחיות מיתיא יקימיננא ("*on the day of the resurrection of the dead* he will raise us up"). The part placed in italics represents the *Targum's* interpretive expansion. Hosea's poetic expression of hope has become, in the *Targum*, fully eschatologized. It may very well be that this interpretive orientation, though of course not the *Targum* itself which is of later vintage, was in circulation as early as the time of Jesus. Jesus presupposed this understanding of the passage, and so alluded to it in

22. For arguments that Jesus did anticipate and speak of his death, see C. A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection?" For further arguments, see France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 333–37.

> his expression of confidence that he would be raised up "after three days" (or, "on the third day"), that is, "on the day of the resurrection of the dead," which given the nearness of the kingdom, it would have been understood, must surely be at hand.[23]

The prophet Hosea originally spoke of national restoration—a time, not too far off in the future, when God would restore the wayward Northern Kingdom. As noted in the discussion of this passage in Chapter 4, it was in later traditions that Hos 6:2 came to be understood as in reference to resurrection, but always in reference to the general resurrection of the final judgment. What appears to be Jesus' unique contribution is applying the prophecy to himself, to a single individual, probably implying his resurrection *before* the general resurrection.

Jesus' passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; and parallels in Matthew and Luke), even if edited and contextualized by the evangelists, likely preserve an authentic core. At the heart of this core lay two principal components: (1) in Jerusalem would Jesus suffer and die and (2) "after three days" or "on the third day" Jesus would be raised up. One may compare synoptically the first passion prediction:

Mark 8:31	*Matt 16:21*	*Luke 9:22*
Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι.	Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς δεικνύειν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα ἀπελθεῖν καὶ πολλὰ παθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι.	…εἰπὼν ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ ἀρχιερέων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι.
And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.	From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.	…saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

23. C. A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection?," 96.

The evidence shows the Synoptic Gospels either describing the prediction of Jesus rising from the dead "on the third day" or "after three days." This is significant in the resurrection tradition. It appears that Hos 6:1–3 is the text to which the earthly Jesus alludes in his Passion predictions and the risen Jesus refers when teaching the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–27) and in his later appearance (24:44–49: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead…").[24]

d. *Ezekiel 37:12–14*

The original setting of Ezek 37:12–14 had nothing to do with personal resurrection. Later Jewish and Christian interpretation, however, may well have found relevance for the resurrection. In the New Testament itself Ezek 37:12–14 is scarcely alluded to. No explicit quotations can be found, but there may be allusions to the passage in Matt 27:51–53 and 1 Thess 4:8. The allusion in Matt 27:51–53 is found in the strange passage where the dead in the tombs are raised up (at the moment of Jesus' death) and the temple veil is torn. The noteworthy point here is that Matthew was already, in a primitive way, exhibiting the same tendency for expansion and elaboration as we see in the later Akhmîm gospel fragment. Wherever Matthew derived this resurrection tradition, he has combined it with other signs and wonders resulting in saints rising from the dead and a great earthquake.[25] He embellished the tradition he received with heightened miraculous elements. Hence what appeared later in the Akhmîm gospel fragment was not entirely unanticipated. In fact, whether by Matthew or a gloss by a later scribe, Matt 27:51–53 may provide evidence of the tendency to embellish miraculous accounts, often by supplying additional witnesses. This will be further explored in Chapter 7.

The other passage that appears to allude to Ezek 37:12–14 is 1 Thess 4:8, where the apostle asserts: "Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." These words appear to echo Ezek 37:14, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and you

24. For arguments in support of the authenticity of the passion predictions, see C. A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict his Death and Resurrection?," 86–96.

25. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–1997), 3:629–35. Not all scholars are convinced that Matt 27:51–52 was part of the original Gospel of Matthew. For the suggestion that these verses constitute an early scribal gloss, see Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 466–67.

shall live." Apart from these possible allusions, Ezekiel 37 apparently does not appear in New Testament writings.

5. *Jesus' Resurrection*

Nearly every writing in the New Testament proclaims the resurrection of Jesus. The four Gospels describe the discovery of the empty tomb. Three of the Gospels describe appearances of the risen Jesus to his followers. (Mark's Gospel provides no appearance stories. However, the original ending of this Gospel remains a much-debated question.) No Gospel actually describes the resurrection event itself. The earliest known description of it is found in the Akhmîm gospel fragment, which will be considered in Chapter 7 and 8.

As it turns out, the earliest written testimony to the resurrection of Jesus is found in the writings not of one of the original disciples but in the writings of the "apostle to the Gentiles," the Apostle Paul. To his important testimony we now turn.

6. *Paul: The Earliest Christian Witness to the Resurrection*

The statement that Jesus rose from the dead "on the third day" is not restricted to the New Testament Gospels. In fact, it is found in one of the earliest Christian credal statements in reference to Jesus' resurrection. The Pauline epistles provide the earliest written witness of a Christian resurrection tradition:

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Cor 15:3–4)

This creed did not originate with Paul. We know it is pre-Pauline because he uses the terms of "receiving" and "handing over" the information, similar to earlier formulaic statements relating to the Eucharist tradition (see 1 Cor 11:23).[26] James D. G. Dunn is "entirely confident" in stating

26. Daniel Alan Smith, *Revisiting the Empty Tomb: The Early History of Easter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 30. See also G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 722–29; J. A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (AB 32; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 541: "The pre-Pauline proclamation is evident in its stereotypical formulation." See also Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor 15:3–7," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 582–89.

that the tradition lurking behind the composition of 1 Cor 15:3–4 "formulated as tradition within months of Jesus' death."[27] A number of scholars believe this formulaic resurrection tradition originated within a few years of Jesus' death.[28] Gary Habermas has compiled a comprehensive citation of biblical scholars, from across the theological spectrum, who agree on the early development of this tradition.[29] Joachim Jeremias referred to this tradition as "the earliest of all."[30] Traces of resurrection and empty tomb tradition can be ascertained in other Pauline epistles. The tradition may have originated in the context of Christian worship in the form of songs, exhortations, prayers, or edification.

a. *When Christians Believed in Resurrection*

The Pauline corpus elucidates what early Christians came to believe *about* the resurrection and also *when* they believed it. Paul is converted to Christianity in the early 30s or "about two years after the crucifixion of Jesus."[31] Then according to Gal 1:18–19, Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother." It is plausible that Paul received this early tradition from the "Lord's brother and Cephas" within five years of said event.

b. *What Christians Believed about Resurrection*

Within a Greco-Roman culture that viewed resurrection belief as disgusting, the early Christian movement thrived in their resurrection-centric faith. Resurrection belief drove the Christians to value all life, which included caring for the body in burial. It is unsurprising that Christians desired to be buried together; however, they innovated a new terminology for their burial practices: κοιμετεριον (*koimētērion*), that is, "cemetery," because death was peacefully thought of as rest or sleep, a temporary holding place.[32] The stratigraphy of the distinctively Christian

27. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 855.

28. Smith, *Revisiting the Empty Tomb*, 30.

29. Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin: College Press, 1996), 153. See n. 44, which lists the scholars.

30. Joachim Jeremias, "Easter: The Earliest Tradition and the Earliest Interpretation," in *New Testament Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 306.

31. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 143.

32. From κοιμήθρα, a sleeping place, and κοίμησις, for lying down to sleep.

"cemetery" was similar to the common *necropolis*, with an added eschatological dimension associated with bodily resurrection. This is noteworthy in that early Christian burial terminology had an inherent eschatological perspective in contrast to the wider Roman terminology for burial (cf. a *mausoleum* for the wealthy or a *sepulcrum* for placing one's ashes). Perhaps the closest Latin comparison to the early Christian cemetery would be *monumentum* which is most likely related to *moneo*, *monere* "to advise or remind," in special recognition of a life. Body dumping was a significant problem in Rome and it has been estimated that there were at least 1,500 abandoned corpses annually.[33] Corpses of the destitute, slaves, and the poor were thrown in mass pits or *petuculi* and forgotten to eternity.[34] The fact that early Christians cared for each individual body in burial, because of a resurrection-centric faith, could account for the rapid spread of the movement among the poor and slave classes in the Roman Empire.

The Pauline letters also describe the nature of the Christian understanding of bodily resurrection. The resurrection is an organic body (σῶμα, lit. "body," 1 Cor 15:35). Paul responds to the foolish person's question (1 Cor 15:35–36), "how are the dead raised?," with a multi-layered response. The hypothetical questioner is answered by an agricultural example (vv. 36–38), a delineation of the similarities and differences of earthly and heavenly or resurrected bodies (vv. 39–44), and finally with a clarion call of hope pointed at the resurrected last Adam (1 Cor 15:45–48), "we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:49). From this tradition we can determine that early Christians believed the resurrected body would be more glorious than the present one.

The Pauline resurrection tradition also foretells cosmic signs and miracles hastening the resurrection of the dead. The dead will rise in a moment (ἐν ἀτόμῳ, lit. "in a flash"), in a twinkling (ἐν ῥιπῇ, lit. "in a blinking") of an eye (1 Cor 15:52). Loud noises accompany this apocalyptic hastening of the dead "at the last trumpet" (ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι, v. 52). In his epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4:16) Paul states that three different sounds will be heard at the resurrection: the cry or command (ἐν κελεύσματι) of the Lord himself, the voice (ἐν φωνῇ) of an archangel, and the trumpet (ἐν σάλπιγγι; cf. 1 Cor 15:52) of God.

Paul desired to describe the never-ending existence of the resurrected body using ἀσθανασία, which means "the state of not being subject to

33. Bernard Green, *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 177.

34. Ibid., 177.

death (that which will never die) or immortality (cf. 1 Tim 6:15–16)."[35] Not only is the existence never ending but the resurrected body never needs to be upgraded, so the apostle used ἀφθαρσία, "the state of not being subject to decay/dissolution/interruption" (cf. Rom 1:23; 1 Cor 15:42, 50, 52–54; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 1:10).[36] Furthermore, "the immortality of the soul" is never found in New Testament literature, because the authors sought to avoid the Platonic connotations such a phrase would imply. Paul's clear description of the resurrected state elucidates his desire, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (κέρδος, lit. "profit," Phil 1:21).

7. *The First Day of the Week and the Lord's Day in Afterlife Tradition*

Another resurrection tradition unique to early Christian texts was a new day of communal worship. The day of worship for Christians migrated from the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday, resurrection day (i.e. "the third day"), as a continuing testimony of the church to the centrality of the resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2). For the Christian, resurrection is not celebrated on Easter alone but every "Lord's Day." The phrase "the first day of the week" was not found in Jewish tradition until the Gospel writers (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 9).[37] The expression "Lord's Day" appears in the book of Revelation, one of the letters of Ignatius, and the Akhmîm gospel fragment, all in reference to the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of Jesus. The importance of this expression will be explored further in Chapter 8.

8. *The Pauline Letters Affirm Christian Faith Based on Jesus' Resurrection*

If the resurrection never happened, said Paul, the early Christians may as well stop suffering for Christ (cf. Rom 12:1–2) and dedicate their lives to pleasure (1 Cor 15:30–32). However, since Jesus has been raised, Paul states that Christians should pursue holy living (cf. 15:33–34). Though Paul did not endorse baptism for the dead, he pointed out that the practice

35. *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), *ad loc*.

36. BDAG, 155.

37. For more on this important topic, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977).

(evidently existent in Corinth and, as I already mentioned,[38] in other works predating the Pauline epistles) is meaningless if there is no resurrection (15:29).[39] From the beginning, Christianity appears to teach that resurrection was not something to be embarrassed about, but something to proclaim and if need be, sacrifice one's life for. If, as suggested by Segal, the late Second Temple period produced a new literary genre known as "martyrology," Christianity gave it a new meaning by devising its own term, μάρτυς (lit. "witness," or transliterated "martyr").[40] The New Testament portrays God's vindication of the first martyr, "the Lord," by raising him from the dead. Jesus is called the "first fruits" of the general resurrection through this vindication and promises eternal vindication for his followers at the final resurrection.

9. *Conclusion*

I have argued throughout this chapter that the New Testament concept of resurrection drew from and adapted ideas from late Second Temple Judaism. In the first part of this chapter, I argued that the canonical Gospels depict Jesus standing in the resurrection tradition extending from Daniel to the Pharisees, teaching a twofold resurrection (Mark 9:31; John 5:28–29; cf. Dan 12:2–3). Jesus, like his scribal and Qumran contemporaries, began reinterpreting Hebrew Bible passages with eschatological consequences. Similarly, Jesus' resuscitation miracles were interpreted in the light of eschatological adumbrations of the final defeat of death. I also urged caution and employed etic distinctions when explaining the difference of resurrection and resuscitation as understood in the New Testament. I suggested that through Jesus' personal resurrection this became in the New Testament a realized eschatology setting the eschatological process in motion with his personal resurrection from the dead.

In reference to Herod Antipas and John the Baptist, it was observed that resurrection opinions were widespread in first-century Jewish culture. This is remarkable considering three hundred years earlier resurrection ideas were hardly attested. It is also significant because I have argued

38. See above, p. 73 n. 24.

39. On the meaning of 1 Cor 15:29, see Hull, *Baptism*.

40. On Christianity's understanding of witness and "martyr," see A. A. Trites, "Μάρτυς and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study," *NovT* 15 (1973): 72–80; idem, "Witness, Testimony," in C. Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 1038–51. Trites rightly cautions against reading later nuances into earlier texts.

throughout this chapter that resurrection in Judaism is an innovation. However, I have argued by appeal to the Pauline corpus that resurrection is articulated from the beginning in the Christian movement. I argued that through Paul we learn what Christians believed about the resurrected body and when they believed it.

Finally, I have argued thus far that by the time of the New Testament, texts which were hundreds of years older, in time comprising the Hebrew Bible, had become fully eschatologized. I have shown how over a few hundred years there have been some major innovations in ideas about a resurrection tradition.

We now turn to Chapter 7, in which the special contribution to this important history of interpretation made by the Akhmîm gospel fragment will be considered. This remarkable writing and its astonishing resurrection narrative will be studied in the context of its time and place.

Chapter 7

PUTTING THE AKHMÎM GOSPEL FRAGMENT IN ITS PLACE I: POLEMIC AND APOLOGETICS

In this chapter I am concerned with two major factors that suggest that the Akhmîm gospel fragment originated in the second century.[1] The first concerns the rise of anti-Semitism and in what ways, if any, second-century anti-Semitism may be reflected in the gospel fragment. If second-century anti-Semitism is reflected in the fragment, a second-century date for the fragment is suggested. The second factor concerns the nature of the polemic that second-century Christians faced, as critics like Celsus and Porphyry raised objections, especially aimed at the gospels and their accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. The objections emanating from the synagogue, as we see them expressed in Justin's Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, will also be taken into account. I shall also look at the apologetics of second-century Christians, such as we see in the *Acts of Pilate*, which were developed in response to Jewish and pagan criticisms. Once again, if the apologetic of the Akhmîm gospel fragment closely coheres with second-century Christian apologetic and like that apologetic seems designed to answer the sort of scepticism and criticism we see expressed in Celsus, Porphyry, and Trypho, then we have very good reason to date the Akhmîm fragment to the second century.

I begin this chapter with a brief overview and critique of the scholarly discussion of the Akhmîm gospel fragment's historical and social location or context. Since its discovery a major argument for dating the text of the gospel fragment to the second century has been the assumption that it is a fragment of the *GPet*, the writing condemned by Bishop Serapion

1. For an extensive collection of over 100 extra-canonical Christian writings composed in the first five centuries of the Christian movement annotated with over 5,000 publications, see J. H. Charlesworth, *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Guide to Publications, with Excurses on Apocalypses* (Atla Bibliography Series 17; Metuchen: American Theological Library Association and Scarecrow Press, 1987).

at the end of the second century. However, the arguments for this identification are very weak and need to be revisited. Of particular interest in this regard is the linkage of the *GPet* with Docetism, a peculiar view of Jesus that emerged near the beginning of the second century. In fact, this ambiguous tradition found in Eusebius offers little help in identifying the Akhmîm fragment with the *GPet*. I also briefly discuss the claims (often little more than an assumption) that one or two papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus, which date to the end of the second century or beginning of the third century, belong to the *GPet* and thus confirm the identification of the Akhmîm fragment with the *GPet*.

1. *Finding a Context for the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment*

In Chapter 1 the question of the identity of the Akhmîm gospel fragment was addressed. There I outlined the arguments that have been given for identifying it as the *GPet*, the gospel discussed by Serapion, bishop of Antioch, at the end of the second century.[2] The circumstantial evidence is reasonable. First, the gospel fragment is written in the first person (7:26–27), and in one place (14:60) this person is expressly identified as Simon Peter. Accordingly, this gospel likely circulated under the name of the great apostle. Second, the gospel fragment was found in a codex along with the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which could suggest that the person who included the gospel fragment believed it was part of a work that circulated under the name of Peter. Third, we know of no other work called the "Gospel of Peter." In view of these factors, the identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *GPet* is not especially daring. It may well be correct.[3]

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to give this question some more thought. According to the Serapion-Eusebian tradition, the *GPet* contains docetic elements, or at least elements consistent with Docetism (*Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.6). But there is nothing docetic about the Akhmîm gospel fragment.

2. As recorded by the fourth-century Church historian Eusebius (see *Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.1–6).

3. These observations have some merit, to be sure, but they amount to no more than circumstantial evidence at best. We may not know of another "Gospel of Peter," but we do know of other writings, written under the name of Peter and in the first person, such as 1–2 Peter, Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Peter*, and *Acts of Peter and the Twelve* (the latter in Nag Hammadi codex VI), which demonstrate that documents claiming first-person Petrine authorship were not uncommon in the first two or three centuries of the Church. This point is made in Kraus and Nicklas (eds.), *Das Petrusevangelium*, 63.

As Matti Myllykoski put it recently, "Das EvPet ist nicht doketisch."[4] To this objection one could reply that the docetic elements may well have been exhibited in other parts of the text, which happen not to be part of the extant fragment. Perhaps. But the scene in which Jesus is physically abused and crucified, in which he gives up his spirit, is the very place where a docetic perspective—if there is one—should be in full view. As has already been noted, appeals to the silence of Jesus, "as having no pain" (4:10), or his cry, "My power, (my) power, you have abandoned me!" (5:19), are not convincing.[5] Rather, what we would expect, if the Akhmîm gospel fragment were truly docetic, is what we actually observe in the *Gospel of Judas*. In this parody of the passion story, Jesus informs Judas Iscariot: "You will do worse than all of them. For the man *who clothes me*, you will sacrifice him" (Tchacos Codex 56.17–21; my emphasis).[6] Here we see a Christology that is typical of Gnosticism and fully compatible with Docetism. Jesus and "the man who clothes" him are not one and the same. The true Jesus only appears (δοκεῖν) to be the human being that one

4. Myllykoski, "Die Kraft des Herrn," 301–26, quotation 326. Of course, what Myllykoski means to say is that the *Akhmîm gospel fragment* is not docetic. See also Markus Vinzent and Tobias Nicklas, "Petrusevangelium," in C. Markschies and J. Schröter (eds.), *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (I. Band in zwei Teilbänden: Evangelien und Verwandtes; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 683–695, here 690. Even John Dominic Crossan, who readily accepts the identification of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the *GPet* discussed in Eusebius, asserts that the passages in the fragment that have been put forward as evidence of Docetism are "hardly docetic." See Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke*, 12.

5. *Pace* Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 107–22. The silence of Jesus points not to Docetism but to the Servant of Isa 53:7 who suffers in silence. See Tobias Nicklas, "Die Leiblichkeit der Gepeinigten: Das Evangelium nach Petrus und frühchristliche Märtyrerakten," in J. Leemans (ed.), *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity: Festschrift Boudewijn Dehandschutter* (BETL 241; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 195–219, here 218.

6. I follow the interpretation and translation found in April D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (London and New York: Continuum, 2007), 89. DeConick, now followed by several respected scholars of Coptic Gnosticism, has corrected the faulty translation and interpretation offered in the first edition of the text edited by Marvin Meyer and others. See Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst (eds.), *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2006). The errors in this edition are egregious. There are some corrections and improvements in the second edition (2008). Judas will "do worse than" the other disciples, for the latter sacrifice animals, but Judas will sacrifice the human being inhabited by the spiritual Jesus. For a concise assessment of the errors of Meyer's translation and interpretation, see Craig A. Evans, "Understanding the Gospel of Judas," *BBR* 20 (2010): 561–74.

can see, hear, touch etc. After he finishes speaking to Judas, Jesus enters the luminous cloud and departs (57.22–23), a version of the ascension that seems based on the older gospel accounts of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8 and parallels) and Ascension (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Judas then fulfils the word of Jesus by handing over the man (whose body only moments before Jesus had inhabited) to the scribes (58.25–26). Thus the man who was crucified was not Jesus at all. Variations on this theme are found in other Gnostic traditions. One of the better known versions is attributed to Basilides (flourished 115–135), who taught that Jesus and Simon of Cyrene, who assisted Jesus with the cross, traded places and that it was Simon who was crucified, not Jesus (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.24.4).[7] This preposterous tradition is preserved in the Qur'an (at 4:156–58),[8] which indicates that it continued to circulate well into the seventh century.

Even if the non-docetic quality of the Akhmîm gospel fragment is conceded, the identification with the *GPet* is still a possibility. It is not clear from the excerpt of Serapion's letter that Eusebius has quoted that the *GPet* is itself said to be docetic. The most relevant part of the letter reads:

> Brothers, grasping what sort of heresy Marcianus (held)[9]…we were enabled by others who study this very gospel [παρ' ἄλλων τῶν ἀσκησάντων αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον], that is, by the successors who initiated it [παρὰ τῶν διαδόχων τῶν καταρξαμένων αὐτοῦ], whom we call Docetists…using (the material

7. This remarkable interpretation reads: "He appeared, then, on earth as a man, to the nations of these powers, and wrought miracles. Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead; so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus, was crucified, through ignorance and error, while Jesus himself received the form of Simon, and, standing by, laughed at them." I might note that in the *Gospel of Judas* Jesus laughs at his disciples.

8. The Qur'anic passage is directed against the Jewish people: "And [we cursed them] for their disbelief and their speaking against Mary a great slander, and [for] their saying, 'Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah.' And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them… No! Allah took him up to himself; and Allah is mighty." The passage is difficult and disputed. See S. A. Mourad, "Jesus in the Qur'an and Other Early Islamic Texts," in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions. The Second Princeton–Prague Symposium on Jesus Research* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 753–65, esp. 756–59.

9. This Marcianus is not to be identified with the well-known Marcion (notwithstanding some manuscripts which have been glossed with the name of Marcion).

> supplied) by them, to go through it and discover that the most part indeed was in accordance with the true teaching of the Saviour, but that some things were added [τινὰ δὲ προσδιεσταλμένα]…" (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.12.4–6).

Serapion's letter is somewhat convoluted. The bishop could be saying that the original form of the *GPet* was unobjectionable, that "the most part… was in accordance with the true teaching of the Saviour" and that the heretical elements "were added." They were added, presumably, by the heretics identified as docetists.[10] But Serapion's wording could suggest that the heretical elements were added to "true teaching of the Saviour" at the time of the writing of the *GPet*. In other words, the spurious gospel was heretical from the beginning. I am inclined to this latter understanding.

After studying the *GPet* more closely, which initially he had allowed to be read in his churches, Serapion came to realize that although for the most part the *GPet* was orthodox, elements were present that should be deemed as heretical. What these heretical elements were, Serapion does not specify (and neither does Eusebius). Moreover, it is not exactly clear how Serapion came to perceive these heretical elements. He obscurely states that "we were enabled by others who study this very gospel" to discern what it really says. Whatever precisely the bishop meant, his language seems to imply at best second-hand acquaintance. Accordingly, the heretical elements and perhaps the alleged docetic elements may owe more to the interpreters of the *GPet* than to the *GPet* itself.

However we nuance Serapion's letter, in what way, if any, the *GPet* is heretical is not clear. All we see in the Akhmîm gospel fragment are elements of the fantastic, a touch of anti-Semitism, apologetic, and a general lack of verisimilitude. We find no "heresy," docetic or otherwise. We are still confronted with the problem with which we began: We are not sure that the fifth-century (or later) Akhmîm gospel fragment truly belongs to the *GPet* that Serapion condemned at the end of the second century.[11]

10. See the discussion in Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary* (TENT 4; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 107–8.

11. The same point has been recently made by Tobias Nicklas, "Das apokryphe *Petrusevangelium*: Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung," in *Greeks, Jews and Christians. Historical, Religious and Philological Studies in Honor of Jesús Peláez del Rosal* (Éstudios de Filologiá Neotestamentaria 10; Cordoba: Ediciones el Almendro, 2013), 253–80. Nicklas rightly cautions (ms, p. 3): "…wir nicht mit letzter Sicherheit davon ausgehen können, dass der im Akhmim-Codex gefundene Text tatsächlich mit der Version des Petrusevangeliums übereinstimmt…" ("…we cannot with certainty assume that the text found in the Akhmîm Codex is wholly consistent with the version of the *Gospel of Peter*…").

Not only do we remain unsure of the identity of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, there are uncertainties relating to the preservation of the text. After all, if we conclude that the fragment is an excerpt of the second-century *GPet*, how can we be sure that its Greek text approximates the original second-century text? These questions are urgent, for if good reasons cannot be provided for saying that the fifth-century (or later) excerpt truly represents the second-century text referenced by Serapion and church historian Eusebius, then one is not in any position to infer from it second-century ideas and issues.[12]

What evidence is there, if any, that suggests that the gospel excerpt found in the Akhmîm Codex could be the *GPet* and, if it is, that its Greek text closely approximates the text as originally composed? I believe there is such evidence and that it is found in eight areas: (1) the coherence of the anti-Semitism of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment with the anti-Semitic expressions of other mid-second to early third-century Church Fathers and Roman writers; (2) the nature of the apologetic of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment, which can be understood as a response to the kind of pagan criticism and polemic levelled against Christians, for example, as we see in Celsus; (3) the coherence of the polymorphic Christology of the Akhmîm fragment with ideas that emerged in the second century; (4) the consistency of the Akhmîm fragment's portrait of Pilate with what is seen in the *Acts of Pilate*, a late second-century work; (5) the coherence of the Akhmîm fragment's imaginative retelling of the resurrection of Jesus with late first-century and second-century Greek romantic novels, which exhibit

12. Secondary literature hardly addresses these questions. However, see Foster, "Are There Any Early Fragments?" Foster rightly sees this problem, concluding that in view of the actual evidence to hand, "it is no longer possible to assert that the first text discovered in the Akhmîm codex is definitely a witness to an archetype dating to the second century" (p. 27). He ends with a caution that scholars should heed: "To make claims about the pre-history of this text in the second century (or even earlier) is to go beyond the available evidence, and in fact may be retrojecting this text into a period when it did not exist, even if some of its canonical and non-canonical sources are much earlier" (p. 28). As an example of this problem Foster cites Mirecki, "Peter, Gospel of." Mirecki states matter-of-factly: "The *Gospel of Peter*…circulated in the mid-first century under the authority of the name Peter. An earlier form of the gospel probably served as one of the major sources for the canonical gospels" (p. 278). Both claims—that *GPet* circulated in the mid-first century and that it served as a source for the canonical gospels—are highly controversial. They are rejected by most gospel scholars and are almost certainly erroneous. Mirecki, moreover, assumes that the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the Oxyrhynchus fragments (i.e. P.Oxy. 2949 and P.Oxy. 4009) are exemplars of the second-century *GPet* condemned by Bishop Serapion.

fascination with apparent death and seemingly miraculous escapes; (6) the consistency of the expression "Lord's day" in the Akhmîm fragment (at 9:35) with the use of this phrase in late first-century and second-century Christian writings (e.g. Rev 1:10; Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9:1); (7) the probability that the Akhmîm gospel fragment circulated under the name of Peter; and (8) the significance that the Gospel of Matthew, on which the Akhmîm fragment relies so heavily, was probably composed in Syria (specifically Antioch) and would have been well known and very influential in Syria, the very region in which the *GPet* circulated and was known.[13] What we have here is an impressive collocation of witnesses, mostly deriving from the eastern Empire and mostly from the late second century, that is, from the time and place in which the *GPet* circulated. The first two areas of inquiry, those of second-century anti-Semitism and of polemic and apologetic, will be treated in the present chapter. The remainder will be treated in Chapter 8.

This evidence potentially justifies identifying the fifth-century (or later) Akhmîm gospel fragment with the second-century *GPet*. It may also justify the assumption that the Greek text of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment closely approximates the original wording of the second-century text known to Serapion and his churches. If the text of the Akhmîm fragment (as we have it and without speculative emendation) coheres closely with the social and political dynamics of the mid-second century, then it is reasonable to assume that the text derives from the second century and still retains its second-century character.

2. *The Rise of Anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire*

Critics have noted that the Akhmîm gospel fragment lacks verisimilitude with respect to the culture and history of first-century Palestine, but it does cohere with the second half of the second century in a setting outside the land of Palestine, whether specifically in Syria or more generally in the Eastern Empire. Indeed, the Akhmîm gospel fragment fits well in the post-Bar Kokhba setting, when anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire increased sharply. It is with the putative anti-Semitism of the fragment we begin our assessment of the evidence.

The anti-Semitism expressed in the Akhmîm gospel fragment coheres with the anti-Semitic expressions found in some mid-second- to early

13. Some contend that Matthew was composed in Palestine, which is to the south of Syria. Even in this case, Matthew originated in the eastern Mediterranean, in the region where the *GPet* circulated and was known.

third-century Roman writers. It is widely acknowledged that anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire took on an uglier, more threatening tone in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt. This observation, as we shall see, is very important.

a. *The Jewish Revolts and Roman Anti-Semitism*

The political and social atmosphere that we infer from the Akhmîm fragment resonates more closely with the second half of the second century than it does with the first century. The New Testament Gospels are at home in the first century and do reflect, for the most part, the pre-70 CE political, social, and religious realities of Palestine. In contrast, the Akhmîm fragment reflects the social and political realities of a much later time, in the aftermath of three disastrous Jewish rebellions (66–73 CE, 115–117 CE, and 132–135 CE) that shook the Roman Empire.

Within a span of two generations, tens of thousands of Roman lives were lost in putting down these rebellions. By mid-second century, the Roman public had lost all patience with the Jewish people. The Jewish nation, as a political entity, had been abolished. Jerusalem was to be rebuilt as a Roman city; its name was to become Aelia Capitolina. Jerusalem was no more. The Jewish temple was no more; on its place a temple dedicated to Jupiter was to be built. The second-century *Epistle of Barnabas* alludes to the destruction of the temple and Jewish hopes to build a new one:

> πέρας γέ τοι πάλιν λέγει· Ἰδού, οἱ καθελόντες τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον, αὐτοὶ αὐτὸν οἰκοδομήσουσιν. γίνεται. διὰ γὰρ τὸ πολεμεῖν αὐτοὺς καθῃρέθη ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν, νῦν καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὑπηρέται ἀνοικοδομήσουσιν αὐτόν.
>
> Furthermore, again he says: "Behold, those who tore down this temple will build it themselves." This is happening now. For because they went to war, it was torn down by their enemies, and now the very servants of their enemies will rebuild it. (*Barn*. 16:3–4)[14]

14. The temporal point of reference of this oracle is difficult to determine. The plans to rebuild could apply as early as only a few years after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, perhaps during the reign of Vespasian. This was argued by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1889–90), 1/2:505–12. Most scholars think *Barnabas* was composed in the second century, so the reference may be closer to the time of Bar Kokhba, perhaps leading up to the revolt (ca. 130 CE). For support of the latter option, see Klaus Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 105–13. Indeed, the Jewish hope of rebuilding the Temple may have been related to Hadrian's visit to Judea in 130 (see his comments below).

Although we have no detailed history of the Bar Kokhba revolt, as we have of the first revolt (66–70 CE) described in Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, three Roman writers provide us with significant information and commentary.[15] Two of them are historians (Appian, Cassius Dio); the third (Marcus Cornelius Fronto) was first tutor, later personal friend and confidant of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE). Appian (ca. 95–165 CE) and Fronto (ca. 95–166 CE) were contemporaries of the revolt, while Dio (ca. 164–after 229 CE) wrote almost one century later.

We now turn to the testimony of the Roman writers. Appian refers to three Roman destructions of Jerusalem:

> The Jewish nation alone resisted, and Pompey conquered them [63 BCE], sent their king, Aristobulus, to Rome, and destroyed [κατέσκαψεν] their greatest and to them holiest city Jerusalem, as Ptolemy, the first king of Egypt, had formerly done. It was afterward rebuilt and Vespasian destroyed [κατέσκαψεν] it again, and Hadrian did the same [αὖθις] in my time. (*Hist. Rom.* 11: *The Syrian Wars* 8 §50)[16]

Appian's examples are not really parallel. Other than a collapsed tower and a breach in the wall, Jerusalem suffered little at the hands of Pompey and his men (cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 1.149; *Ant.* 14.69). The city was hardly "destroyed" (κατασκάπτειν can also mean to "demolish," "level," or "raze"). The second taking of Jerusalem, of course, resulted in the complete destruction of the city and temple. In this case κατασκάπτειν is quite appropriate and is in fact the very word that Josephus uses (*J.W.* 7.1). The extent of destruction in the third taking of Jerusalem is unclear, principally because we do not know to what extent the city had been rebuilt following the end of the first revolt. (See Dio below who also uses κατασκάπτειν to describe the capture of Jerusalem.) There is also some doubt as to whether or not Simon ben Kosiba actually occupied Jerusalem.

We now turn to the two most important references from Roman sources. One of them provides an eyewitness account. As an elderly man Fronto wrote a letter of consolation to his long-time friend and emperor Marcus Aurelius in the aftermath of a serious military setback in Armenia around 162 CE. The letter was occasioned by the defeat and destruction by the

15. There is a fourth writer, the anonymous author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, a late fourth-century collection of imperial biographies that is not always reliable, also refers to the revolt. For a discussion of the Bar Kokhba revolt and the factors that may have given rise to it, see Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (AGJU 25; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 183–211.

16. Adaptation of Horace White, *Appian's Roman History II* (LCL 3; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912–13), 199.

Parthians of the legate Severianus and his legion. Fronto consoled Marcus Aurelius, making reference to his grandfather Hadrian, the Emperor who put down the Bar Kokhba revolt. Fronto reminded Marcus Aurelius how the Romans sometimes suffer, even painfully, but then God always leads them on to triumphs:

> The God who begat the great Roman race has no compunction in suffering us to faint at times and be defeated and wounded… But always and everywhere he turned our sorrows into successes and our terrors into triumphs. But not to hark back too far into ancient times, I will take instances from your own family…under the rule of your grandfather Hadrian what a number of soldiers were killed by the Jews…[17]

It is significant that Fronto refers to the Bar Kokhba war as an example of past Roman defeats and wounds. He probably regarded the Bar Kokhba revolt as an instance not of defeat—for Rome ultimately won the war—but as an instance of a grievous wound, in view of the heavy casualties suffered by Rome.[18]

Fronto was a middle-aged man during the revolt and would have been privy to Hadrian's official dispatches to the Roman Senate. Accordingly, Fronto would have known that Roman losses were heavy and the imperial greeting had been omitted. Fronto's letter of consolation, in which heavy losses are admitted, is in some ways atypical. Victorious empires, be they Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, or later Roman, rarely recorded their setbacks. Hence, I find Fronto's candour interesting, an admission by a friend of the emperor that Roman losses were heavy: "What a number of soldiers were killed at the hands of the Jews" (*On the Parthian War*, 2). Fronto's consoling words to Marcus Aurelius, in which he compares Hadrian's losses to those recently suffered in Armenia, add further support to the supposition that Roman losses were indeed heavy. Fronto's comparison of the Jewish war with the Parthian setback corroborates important aspects of Dio's *History*.

Dio Cassius provides us with the longest and most detailed account of the Bar Kokhba revolt. The relevant portions are as follows:

17. Trans. Charles Reginald Haines, *The Correspondence of Marcus Cornelius Fronto II* (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919–20), 21–23.

18. Fronto could easily have appealed to the Punic Wars (fought off and on from 264 BCE to 146 BCE), in which Rome suffered heavy losses at the hands of the armies and navies of Carthage. Apparently Roman losses in the Bar Kokhba war were heavy enough (and suffered more recently) that Fronto did not need to reach too far back in Roman history. As in the Bar Kokhba war, so also in the Punic Wars, Rome eventually prevailed.

> At Jerusalem [Hadrian] founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there. So long, indeed, as Hadrian was close by in Egypt and again in Syria, they remained quiet…but when he went farther way, they openly revolted… Hadrian sent against them his best generals. Best of these was Julius Severus, who was dispatched from Britain, where he was governor, against the Jews. Severus did not venture to attack his opponents in the open at any one point, in view of their numbers and their desperation, but by intercepting small groups, thanks to the number of his soldiers and his under-officers, and by depriving them of food and shutting them up, he was able, rather slowly, to be sure, but with comparatively little danger, to crush, exhaust and exterminate them. Very few of them in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out. Thus nearly the whole of Judaea was made desolate… Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, "If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health." (*Hist. Rom.* 69.12.1–14.3)[19]

Dio's description is quite remarkable. He provides us with several important details: (1) the Jewish war effort was extensive and evidently widely supported ("in view of their numbers") and initially successful. This is the most likely inference to be drawn from the necessity to dispatch Julius Severus the "best" (which is probably what πρῶτος, first," means here) of Rome's generals, all the way from one end of the empire to the other. Even then Severus had to proceed with caution, not venturing "to attack his opponents in the open at any one point." From Dio's reference to "their desperation" we probably should infer extreme commitment, even fanaticism, on the part of the Jewish people, and not despair, as Dio's word (ἀπόγνωσις) could imply. (2) The destruction of Judea and the Jewish people was catastrophic. The Jews were hunted and "exterminated." "Very few of them survived." The city of Jerusalem, as well as numerous fortresses and villages, were destroyed [κατασκάπτειν]. Jewish military casualties, Dio would have us believe, exceeded half a million, while the number of deaths from the side effects of the war

19. Trans. Earnest Cary, *Dio's Roman History VIII* (LCL 176; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914–27), 449–51. See the discussion in John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 89–98.

"was past finding out." Dio's numbers may be exaggerated (and probably are), but their precision does suggest that they are based on some sort of official counts. The death count most likely included women and children. If these numbers are no more than literary hyperbole, then why not say one thousand villages, instead of "nine hundred and eighty-five," or five hundred thousand, instead of "five hundred and eighty thousand"? (3) Rome suffered heavy losses also. Dio is either unwilling or unable to report the number of Roman casualties. He says "many" (πολλοί), which in the context of the comparison with the Jewish losses suggests that the Roman losses may have been enormous, as Fronto's consoling letter to Marcus Aurelius implies. Hadrian's personal presence in Judea, as well as his omission of the customary opening phrase ("I and the legions are in health") from his reports, supports this suggestion. Indeed, epigraphic evidence attests that a large legionary force was needed to suppress the Bar Kokhba revolt.[20]

In *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, John G. Gager contends, rightly in my view, that the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt marked the turning point in relations among pagans, Christians, and Jews throughout the empire. The events leading up to 135 CE left deep impressions in the face of Judaism and in the nature and character of relations between Jews and pagans. Jerusalem had become a pagan city (Aelia Capitolina) and Jews were forbidden entry. Epiphanius (ca. 315–403 CE) refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem with the new name of Aelia (*On Weights and Measures* 14–15).[21] Hadrian's prohibition of circumcision and other Jewish observances remained in effect, and a reorganized province (*Syria Palaestina*) was created with two full legions as occupying forces.[22]

I am persuaded by Gager's argument that Bar Kokhba (and the two earlier Jewish revolts) drastically influenced Roman views of Jews and Judaism:

> How did the wars influence Rome's view of Judaism? Granting the exaggerations of Dio's casualty figures, the impact of the wars should not be underestimated. There is ample evidence that Rome regarded them as major events—the *Judaea capta* coins issued under Vespasian and Titus, the commemorative arches of the same emperors, the drastic political measures of

20. Besides epigraphic attestation of the presence of legions in Judea, there is epigraphic attestation and epistolary documentation relating to the war, destruction of buildings, and repairs.

21. *PG* 43.260–61.

22. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 89. However, the circumcision ban was lifted.

> Hadrian, and Dio's report that after the war in 132–135 Hadrian dispensed with the customary formula, "I and the army are well," when he wrote to the senate.[23]

The Roman triumph over the Jewish people become known throughout the empire and beyond, even as far as modern-day Oxfordshire, where the decorative Roman gold coin, inscribed with the words *Judaea capta*, was discovered.[24] The unique gold coin struck by order of the Roman emperor Vespasian is arguably the most important single coin ever found in Oxfordshire. It was struck in Judea in 70 CE and found ca. 1850 at Finstock, Oxfordshire. Vespasian was given command of the Roman army at the beginning of the first Jewish revolt. When he was proclaimed emperor he gave command of the army to his son Titus, who brought the war to a successful conclusion. The gold for the coin almost certainly came from the Temple itself, which was destroyed when the Romans sacked Jerusalem. The stamping "The Justice of Titus" on gold from the Temple served as a chilling reminder to all in the empire that revolt would not be tolerated. According to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, in the bloody suppression of the Jewish revolt, the Temple was burned and perhaps as many as half a million died. The coin is a testimony to Roman ruthlessness and is now on display for all to see.

Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 56–ca. 120 CE), in his account of the first great war, "accuses the Jews of harbouring a bitter hatred of all men and rails against their separatism."[25] Similar complaints are voiced by other Graeco-Romans. The Roman satirist Juvenal (ca. 60–ca. 130) rarely missed an opportunity to mock the Jewish people and their distinctive

23. Ibid., 90. See Dio, *History* 69.14; cf. also 65.7, where the Roman author reports that Titus and Vespasian refused the title *Judaicus* following the war in 66–73 CE.

24. Indeed, a few of the *Judaea capta* coins are on display in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

25. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 90. Tacitus gives voice to anti-Semitic sentiments in a number of places in his writings. Here are only a few examples: "The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor" (*Histories* 5.4.1); "the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity…the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity" (5.5.1). For scholarly treatments of the anti-Semitism of Tacitus, in the context of the Greco-Roman world, see Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), esp. 183–96; Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 31–33, 74–81, 189—93.

beliefs and practices.[26] We are told that the philosopher Euphrates uttered the following words to Vespasian after the first Jewish war:

> For these people have for a long time rebelled not only against the Romans but against all men. By their unsocial way of life and their refusal to have anything in common with others, whether food, libations, prayers or sacrifices, they are more removed from us than Susa, Bactria or the Indians beyond.[27]

The Bar Kokhba war impacted the Roman Empire enormously, leaving behind a bitter memory for decades, ushering in an era of anti-Semitism felt throughout the empire. The evidence of Cassius Dio, Fronto, Appian, and Tacitus, as well as the epigraphic evidence, demonstrates the presence of widespread anti-Semitism among the elite in the second-century Roman Empire. This anti-Semitism probably reached its ugliest level in the years immediately following the defeat of Bar Kokhba.[28] This is the backdrop of the second half of the second century CE, where Christian writers sensed the need and advantage in distancing themselves from Judaism and the Jewish people. Not surprisingly, some Christian writers (recognizing that being categorized with Jews would no longer afford them religious tolerance) echoed the criticism expressed by Roman writers, who viewed the Jewish people as being stubborn, rebellious, and at odds with Roman authority.

b. *The Jewish Revolts and Christian Anti-Semitism*

The Jewish revolts impacted Christian attitudes toward the Jewish people, the very matrix from which the Jesus movement arose. As early as the middle of the first century the apostle Paul found it necessary to scold

26. E.g. "Inclined to flout the law of Rome, they learn and practice and revere the Jewish law…forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites…" (*Satires* 14.96–106, here 100–104). See also *Satires* 6.153–60, 542–47; 8.158–62.

27. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 5.33. Similar sentiments are attributed to Apollonius of Tyana in 5.27.

28. For analysis of the two second-century Jewish revolts, see E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (SJLA 20; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 389–466. It was during the Bar Kokhba revolt and the years following that relations between the Jewish people and the Roman Empire reached their lowest point. Commenting on Jewish legend, including rabbinic traditions, in which in colourful ways contempt for emperor Hadrian is expressed, Smallwood states: "The bitter and lasting hatred felt by the Jews for Hadrian personally, more virulent than their hatred for Titus, *testifies to at least some degree of oppression after the revolt* in the form of a change from the customary Roman policy of the protection of Judaism" (p. 466, my emphasis).

Gentile Christians in Rome (and, in principle, probably throughout the Church) not to be arrogant with respect to the Jewish people—Christian Jews or non-Christian Jews alike (see Rom 11). Ugly incidents had occurred in the first half of the first century, including pogroms in Egypt and a possible expulsion of Jews, along with other minorities, in Rome itself, either in 41 or 49 CE. The first great revolt only added to the strain between Christians and Jews (again, whether Christian or not). The subsequent second-century revolts further compounded the problem.[29]

As the Christian movement drifted further from its Jewish matrix it became easier and more tempting to join the Roman chorus of criticism. For second-century Christians criticism of Judaism not only was necessary for defensive purposes, it was necessary for self-affirmation, especially in view of Jewish rejection of Christian claims.[30] Of course, this strategy, in one form or another, can be seen at work in the first-century writings of the New Testament. In the gospels, especially those of Matthew and John, which above all are constructed very much with a sceptical synagogue in mind, scripture after scripture is cited as "fulfilled." Every aspect of the ministry of Jesus, from his works or power to his suffering and death, fulfilled scripture and so justified a response of faith. Even Jewish rejection of his message fulfilled scripture, as we hear in the fourth evangelist: "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him; it was that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 'Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" (John 12:37–38).

But in the second century Christian apologetic and criticism over against Judaism and the Jewish people took on a new complexion. No longer was the polemic intramural, brother criticizing brother, as it were. Jews and Christians increasingly saw themselves as enemies. The Jewish fall from grace in the eyes of the Roman Empire created an opportunity for Christian apologists, who in various ways found themselves fending off pagan criticisms and charges, on the one hand, and Jewish expressions of scepticism and rejection, on the other. The latter is well illustrated in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, a work composed shortly before the middle of the second century. It is a work that probably

29. The Jewish wars were a factor in driving apart Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. See Reidar Hvalvik, "Jewish Believers and Jewish Influence in the Roman Church until the Early Second Century," in Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (eds.), *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 179–216.

30. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fraticide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 181.

authentically represents a well-informed Jewish scepticism of the claims of Christians.[31] Justin, a native of Palestine, was a contemporary of Simon ben Kosiba and knew first-hand of the high cost of his rebellion. It is not surprising that he alludes to the recent war and its aftermath:

> Christ said among you that he would give the sign of Jonah, exhorting you to repent…in order that your nation and city might not be taken and destroyed, as they have been destroyed…yet even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent. (108.1, 3)[32]

Justin's reference to "destruction" most likely has in mind the Jewish wars with Rome. His appeal to the words of Jesus, that is, the "sign of Jonah" (Matt 12:39–40), imply that prophecy has been fulfilled. Despite the warning long ago and now the tragic fulfilment, the Jewish people refuse to repent.

In his first *Apology*, written to Marcus Aurelius, Justin refers specifically to Bar Kokhba's persecuting and exterminating Christians:

> οἳ καὶ ἀναγινώσκοντες οὐ συνιᾶσι τὰ εἰρημένα, ἀλλ' ἐχθροὺς ἡμᾶς καὶ πολεμίους ἡγοῦνται, ὁμοίως ὑμῖν ἀναιροῦντες καὶ κολάζοντες ἡμᾶς ὁπόταν δύνωνται, ὡς καὶ πεισθῆναι δύνασθε. Καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῦν γεγενημένῳ Ἰουδαϊκῷ πολέμῳ, Βαρχωχέβας ὁ τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἀποστάσεως ἀρχηγέτης, Χριστιανοὺς μόνους εἰς τιμωρίας δεινάς, εἰ μὴ ἀρνοῖντο Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ βλασφημοῖεν, ἐκέλευεν ἀπάγεσθαι.
>
> [The prophetic books] are also in the possession of all Jews throughout the world; but they, though they read, do not understand what is said, but count us foes and enemies; and, like yourselves, they kill and punish us whenever they have the power, as you can well believe. For in the Jewish war which lately raged, Barchochebas [Βαρχωχέβας],[33] the leader of the revolt of the

31. Trypho the Jew is not a stereotype or straw man, the purpose of which is to dismantle. His objections, which in important ways cohere with the somewhat earlier objections the fourth evangelist attempts to address, are not always successfully answered by Justin Martyr. See Timothy J. Horner, *"Listening to Trypho": Justin Martyr's Dialogue Reconsidered* (CBET 28; Leuven: Peeters, 2001). The *Dialogue* may have been written only a few years after the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt and then later revised after 150.

32. *PG* 6.725–26.

33. Craig Evans clarifies, "In Justin and Eusebius Bar Kokhba's name appears as Βὰρ Χωχέβας (with or without a space), or simply as Χωχέβας or Χωχεβᾶς. Jerome spells it *Bar-chochebas* and *Bar-chochabas*." See C. A. Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, 191 n. 20. There is little doubt that these Christian fathers are referring to Simon ben Kosibah, a.k.a. Bar Kokhba, leader of the third great Jewish rebellion, 132–135 CE.

> Jews, gave orders that Christians alone should be led to cruel punishments, unless they should deny Jesus the Christ and blaspheme. (Justin, *1 Apol.* 31.5–6)[34]

The destruction of Judea is alluded to in Eusebius' *Chronicle*, where he says that the "Jews took up arms and devastated Palestine during the period in which the governor of the province was Tineius Rufus, to whom Hadrian sent an army in order to crush the rebels" (*Hadrian Year 16*).[35] Like Justin, Eusebius mentions in his *Chronicle* the extermination of Christians at the hands of Bar Kokhba: "Cochebas, prince of the Jewish sect, killed the Christians with all kinds of persecutions, (when) they refused to help him against the Roman troops" (*Hadrian Year 17*).[36] Christian writers are clearly attempting to distance themselves from the Jews. The Christian movement may have Jewish roots. Indeed, the Christian Saviour was himself Jewish, but the Christian movement had nothing to do with the recent Jewish revolt or with any of the previous revolts, for which the Roman public now condemns them. Not only were Christians not allied to the Jewish rebels, they suffered at the hands of the Jewish rebels. In a sense, both Christians and Romans were victims of Jewish rebelliousness and violence. But why were Christians persecuted, especially in the context of the Bar Kokhba revolt?

Craig Evans suggests that messianism had something to do with Bar Kokhba's persecution of Christians:

> The Christian writers call Bar Kokhba "leader" and "instigator," but never "Messiah." Nevertheless, references to persecution may imply that Bar Kokhba had made messianic claims. According to Justin Martyr, Christians "alone" were tortured and executed if they did not renounce Jesus as Messiah (ὁ χριστός). Presumably, this renunciation was required because Bar Kokhba *alone* was recognized as Israel's Messiah, not the Jesus of Christian beliefs. So far as we know, Christians were the only sect among second-century Jews to hold fiercely to a particular person as Israel's "Messiah." Eusebius' claim that Christians were persecuted if they refused to aid Bar Kokhba coheres with Justin's statement. (It also is in agreement with one of the Bar Kokhba letters that threatens punishment for failing to fight for the cause…) Christians' refusal to support the revolt was probably due not to pacifism, but to their refusal to recognize neither Bar Kokhba's messianic recognition nor the goals of the revolt itself.[37]

34. *PG* 6.376–77.
35. *PG* 19.558.
36. *PG* 19.558.
37. Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries*, 193.

Severe treatment of Jewish Christians may also have been due to the fear that the Christian movement was perceived as a threat to Judaism. Just as emperor Hadrian's ban against circumcision threatened the very future of the Jewish people, it is quite possible some Jewish religious leaders saw a similar threat in the Christian movement, a movement that increasingly was breaking down the cultural barriers between Jew and Gentile.[38]

Eusebius (ca. 260–340) offers the most detailed description of the church's experience during the third Jewish war. The depopulation of the region was so extensive that the ethnic character of the Christian church in Judea was completely transformed. There would be no more Jewish bishops. Eusebius dwells upon the war at length and, in particular, on the suffering of Christians at the hands of Bar Kokhba. He does so because it placed the church on the side of Rome and not on the side of the Jewish rebellion. It was very important for the influential historian of the Christian movement to make this strategic point crystal clear to what had become in his time a sympathetic Roman government. In the minds of many Romans the Christian movement was still seen as in some sense Jewish, and if Jewish, then perhaps should share some of the blame for the past disturbances and loss of life. According to Eusebius:

> Καὶ δὴ τὰ τῆς Ἰουδαίων ἀποστασίας αὖθις εἰς μέγα καὶ πολὺ προελθούσης, Ῥοῦφος ἐπάρχων τῆς Ἰουδαίας, στρατιωτικῆς αὐτῷ συμμαχίας ὑπὸ βασιλέως πεμφθείσης, ταῖς ἀπονοίαις αὐτῶν ἀφειδῶς χρώμενος ἐπεξῄει, μυριάδας ἀθρόως ἀνδρῶν ὁμοῦ καὶ παίδων καὶ γυναικῶν διαφθείρων, πολέμου τε νόμῳ τὰς χώρας αὐτῶν ἐξανδραποδιζόμενος. Ἐστρατήγει δὲ Ἰουδαίων τηνικαῦτα Βαρχωχεβᾶς ὄνομα, ὃ δὴ ἀστέρα δηλοῖ, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα φονικὸς καὶ λῃστρικός τις ἀνήρ, ἐπὶ δὲ τῇ προσηγορίᾳ, οἷα ἐπ' ἀνδραπόδων, ὡς δὴ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ φωστὴρ αὐτοῖς κατεληλυθώς, κακουμένοις τε ἐπιλάμψαι τερατευόμενος. Ἀκμάσαντος δὲ τοῦ πολέμου ἔτους ὀκτωκαιδεκάτου τῆς ἡγεμονίας Ἀδριανοῦ κατὰ Βήθθηρα πόλιν, ἥτις ἦν ὀχυρωτάτη, τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων οὐ σφόδρα πόρρω διεστῶσα, τῆς τε ἔξωθεν πολιορκίας χρονίου γενομένης, λιμῷ τε καὶ δίψει τῶν νεωτεροποιῶν εἰς ἔσχατον ὀλέθρου περιελαθέντων, καὶ τοῦ τῆς ἀπονοίας αὐτοῖς αἰτίου τὴν ἀξίαν ἐκτίσαντος δίκην, τὸ πᾶν ἔθνος ἐξ ἐκείνου καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα γῆς πάμπαν ἐπιβαίνειν εἴργεται, νόμου δόγματι καὶ διατάξεσιν Ἀδριανοῦ, ὡς ἂν μηδ' ἐξ ἀπόπτου

38. On the place of messianism in the separation of Jews and Christians, see Craig A. Evans, "Root Causes of the Jewish–Christian Rift: From Jesus to Justin," in S. E. Porter and B. W. R. Pearson (eds.), *Christian–Jewish Relations through the Centuries* (JSNTSup 192; Roehampton Institute London Papers 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 20–35. According to Evans, "We may conclude that the primary objection to Christian claims that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was in fact Israel's Messiah was the fact of his death, and a shameful one at that. From a Jewish perspective, this objection was fatal" (p. 34). Evans has alluded to the very argument Trypho levels against Justin (see *Dialogue* 89–90).

> θεωροῖεν τὸ πατρῷον ἔδαφος, ἐγκελευσαμένου, Ἀρίστων ὁ Πελλαῖος ἱστορεῖ. Οὕτω δὴ τῆς πόλεως εἰς ἐρημίαν τοῦ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους, και παντελῆ φθορὰν τῶν πάλαι οἰκητόρων ἐλθούσης, ἐξ ἀλλοφύλου τε γένους συνοικισθείσης, ἡ μετέπειτα συστᾶσα Ῥωμαϊκὴ πόλις τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἀμείψασα, εἰς τὴν τοῦ κρατοῦντος Αἰλίου Ἀδριανοῦ τιμήν, Αἰλία προσαγορεύεται. Καὶ δὴ τῆς αὐτόθι Ἐκκλησίας ἐξ ἐθνῶν συγκροτηθείσης, πρῶτος μετὰ τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς ἐπισκόπους, τὴν τῶν ἐκεῖσε λειτουργίαν ἐγχειρίζεται Μάρκος.
>
> As the rebellion of the Jews at this time grew much more serious, Rufus, governor of Judea, after an auxiliary force had been sent him by the emperor, using their madness as a pretext, proceeded against them without mercy, and destroyed indiscriminately thousands of men and women and children, and in accordance with the laws of war reduced their country to a state of complete subjection. The leader of the Jews at this time was a man by the name of Barcocheba (which signifies a star), who possessed the character of a robber and a murderer, but nevertheless, relying upon his name, boasted to them, as if they were slaves, that he possessed wonderful powers; and he pretended that he was a star that had come down to them out of heaven to bring them light in the midst of their misfortunes. The war raged most fiercely in the eighteenth year of Hadrian, at the city of Bithara, which was a very secure fortress, situated not far from Jerusalem. When the siege had lasted a long time, and the rebels had been driven to the last extremity by hunger and thirst, and the instigator of the rebellion had suffered his just punishment, the whole nation was prohibited from this time on by a decree, and by the commands of Hadrian, from ever going up to the country about Jerusalem. For the emperor gave orders that they should not even see from a distance the land of their fathers. Such is the account of Aristo of Pella. And thus, when the city had been emptied of the Jewish nation and had suffered the total destruction of its ancient inhabitants, it was colonized by a different race, and the Roman city which subsequently arose changed its name and was called Aelia, in honor of the emperor Aelius Hadrian. And as the church there was now composed of Gentiles, the first one to assume the government of it after the bishops of the circumcision was Marcus. (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.6.1–4)[39]

Eusebius' account coheres with the earlier Roman writers in its description of the human catastrophe. Thousands of men, women, and children were destroyed "in crowds, all together" (ἀθρόως), with the result that Jerusalem's "ancient inhabitants…completely perished." The succession of Jewish bishops, beginning with Peter and continuing with James the brother of Jesus, had now come to an end.

Although there were outbursts of anti-Semitism in the first century, even before the first Jewish rebellion, it was not until the second century that a sustained and growing anti-Semitism emerged. Tacitus, the influential

39. Trans. Kirsopp Lake, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* (LCL 153; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926–32), 2:311–13 (*PG* 20.309–16).

historian and statesman writing in the early years of the second century, gave frequent expression to some of the worst forms of anti-Semitism. The north African revolt (115–117), put down by emperor Trajan, and then the catastrophic Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135), put down by emperor Hadrian, only fanned the flames of anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire.

The anti-Jewish elements in the Akhmîm gospel fragment cohere with the anti-Semitism expressed in mid-second- to early third-century Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr (Palestinian), Tertullian (Carthaginian), and Origen (Alexandrian). These Church Fathers wrote in the aftermath of the north African and Bar Kokhba revolts and in the very regions in which these revolts took place, that is, north Africa and Palestine, the precise area in which the Akhmîm gospel fragment likely circulated.[40] Before we examine the anti-Jewish elements of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, we must review the anti-Semitic expression in these Fathers.

Justin Martyr's anti-Semitism usually came to expression in his polemics against the Jews in theological and historical matters. His was not an anti-Semitism in the usual Greco-Roman sense. It grew out of theological controversy. According to Justin the Jews "hate us [Christians]"; they are Christ killers. Indeed, "all these things happened to Christ at the hands of the Jews." Their treatment of Jesus was "shameful." Not surprisingly, after "slaying the Christ, they did not repent." Justin adds:

> And this the Jews who possessed the books of the prophets did not understand, and therefore did not recognise Christ even when he came, but even hate us who say that he has come, and who prove that, as was predicted, he was crucified by them. (Justin, *1 Apol.* 35)[41]

> And again, when he says, "They spoke with their lips, they wagged the head, saying, Let him deliver himself." And that all these things happened to Christ at the hands of the Jews, you can ascertain. For when he was crucified, they did shoot out the lip, and wagged their heads, saying, "Let him who raised the dead save himself." (Justin, *1 Apol.* 35)[42]

40. Thanks to Eusebius, who relates the story of Bishop Serapion, we know that the *GPet* circulated in Rhossus and was known in Antioch of Syria in the second half of the second century. For a more general study of the history of Syrian Antioch, see Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). For studies that focus on the religions of Syrian Antioch, see Frederick W. Norris, "Antioch on-the-Orontes as a Religious Center, I. Paganism before Constantine," in *ANRW* II.18.4 (1990): 2322–79; Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

41. Trans. based on *ANF* 1:175.

42. Trans. based on *ANF* 1:175.

> …did not recognise him; and not only so, but even treated him shamefully. (Justin, *1 Apol.* 47)[43]

> For truly your hand is high to commit evil, because you killed the Christ, and do not repent of it; but so far from that, you hate and murder us who have believed through him in the God and Father of all, as often as you can; and you curse him without ceasing, as well as those who side with him. (Justin, *Dial*. 132)[44]

The charge that the Jews "curse him without ceasing" (*Dial.* 132) may allude to the revised twelfth benediction of the well-known synagogue prayer called the *Amidah* (or *Shemoneh Esra*, the "Eighteen [Benedictions]"). In its original form the benediction cursed heretics and prayed that God would soon "root out" the wicked kingdom (i.e. Rome). Although it is disputed, the evidence suggests that this benediction was updated to include a curse against Christians, in effect damning them. Christians in the synagogue could not utter aloud such a malediction and so, when their silence was observed, they were expelled from the synagogue.

Tertullian (ca. 150–240 CE), the Christian thinker from Carthage (in modern day Tunisia), levelled a sharp polemic against the Jews. Tertullian shares the opinion of Justin that the Jews "crucified Christ" and "the synagogue of Israel did slay him," and that they will receive divine recompense, in their own words, upon "us, and upon our children":

> Judea, whose God you Romans once honoured with victims, and its temple with gifts, and its people with treaties; and which would never have been beneath your sceptre but for that last and crowning offence against God, in rejecting and crucifying Christ. (Tertullian, *Apol.* 25)[45]

> Accordingly, all the synagogue of Israel *did* slay him, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss him, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children"; and, "If you dismiss him, you are not a friend of Caesar"; in order that all things might be fulfilled which had been written of him. (Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 8)[46]

Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254 CE) of Alexandria writes similarly, criticizing the Jews as being cursed for their "unbelief," and for the other "insults that they heaped on Jesus." Because of these sins Origen pronounces a

43. Trans. based on *ANF* 1:179.
44. Trans. based on *ANF* 1:266.
45. Trans. based on *ANF* 3:40.
46. Trans. based on *ANF* 3:160.

prophetic judgment that the Jews shall "suffer more than others" in the afterlife; but even now are suffering as "exiles." The Jews are punished now and yet will be in the future because of how they treated Jesus:

> Therefore we may see, that after the advent of Jesus the Jews were altogether abandoned, and possess now none of what were considered their ancient glories, so that there is no indication of any Divinity abiding amongst them. For they have no longer prophets nor miracles, traces of which to a considerable extent are still found among Christians, and some of them more remarkable than any that existed among the Jews; and these we ourselves have witnessed, if our testimony may be received. But the Jew of Celsus exclaims: "Why did we treat him, whom we announced beforehand, with dishonour? Was it that we might be chastised more than others?" To which we have to answer, that on account of their unbelief, and the other insults which they heaped upon Jesus, the Jews will not only suffer more than others in that judgment which is believed to impend over the world, but have even already endured such sufferings. For what nation is an exile from their own metropolis, and from the place sacred to the worship of their fathers, save the Jews alone? And these calamities they have suffered, because they were a most wicked nation, which, although guilty of many other sins, yet has been punished so severely for none, as for those that were committed against our Jesus. (Origen, *Cels.* 2.8)[47]

> …if it be not the case that the whole Jewish nation was overthrown within one single generation after Jesus had undergone these sufferings at their hands. (Origen, *Cels.* 4.22)[48]

The anti-Semitism of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment coheres with the anti-Semitic expressions of these and other mid-second- to early third-century Church Fathers. As has been mentioned, they are eastern Fathers, mostly dating to the late second century and early third century, the place and time when the *GPet* circulated. Indeed, Justin Martyr was from Palestine, immediately south of Syria, and his protégé Tatian (d. ca. 179) was himself from Syria, where Serapion later served as bishop (of Antioch).

The Akhmîm Gospel fragment reflects the anti-Semitism of the second century.[49] One of the recurring themes and general purposes of the

47. Trans. based on *ANF* 4:433.

48. Trans. based on *ANF* 4:506.

49. As rightly observed in Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 101–4, 200–10, and elsewhere. Early on Vaganay perceived the significance of the apologetic tendencies in the Akhmîm gospel fragment. Vaganay (83) remarks: "Les détails propres au fragment d'Akhmîm, bien loin de provenir d'un fonds très ancien, reflètent uniquement les vues personnelles de l'auteur et le courant d'idées de son milieu"

fragment is to move the blame and responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus from Roman officials to Jewish leadership. Foster states that "such [authorial] changes seek to remove the stigma of Jesus being condemned by what may be viewed in Gentile eyes as legitimate Roman jurisdiction."[50] Indeed, from the outset in what survives of the extant fragment the prejudice against the Jews is quite plain:

> …τ[ῶν] δὲ Ἰουδαίων οὐδεὶς ἐνίψατο τὰς χεῖρας, οὐδὲ Ἡρῴδης οὐδ' εἷς [τ]ῶν κριτῶν αὐτοῦ. καὶ [μὴ] βουληθέντω[ν] νίψασθαι ἀνέστη Πειλᾶτος. καὶ τότε κελεύει Ἡρῴδης ὁ βασιλεὺς παρ[αλη]μφθῆναι τὸν κν̄, εἰπὼν αὐτοῖς ὅτι· Ὅσα ἐκέλευσα ὑμῖν ποιῆσαι αὐτῷ, ποιήσατε. ἱστήκει δὲ ἐκεῖ Ἰωσὴφ ὁ φίλος Πειλάτου καὶ τοῦ κῡ. καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι [5]σταυρίσκειν αὐτὸν μέλλουσιν, ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πειλᾶτον καὶ ᾔτησε τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κῡ πρὸς ταφήν. καὶ ὁ Πειλᾶτος πέμψας πρὸς Ἡρῴδην ᾔτησεν αὐτοῦ τὸ σῶμα. καὶ ὁ Ἡρῴδης ἔφη ἀδελφὲ Πειλᾶτε, εἰ καὶ μή τις αὐτὸν ἠτήκει, ἡμεῖς αὐτὸν ἐθάπτομεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ σάββατον ἐπιφώσκει· γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ἥλιον μὴ δῦναι ἐπὶ πεφονευμένῳ. καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν τῷ λαῷ πρὸ μιᾶς τῶν ἀζύμων, τῆς ἑορτῆς αὐτῶν.
>
> …but of the Jews no-one washed the hands, nor Herod, nor one of his judges. And when they were not willing to wash, Pilate rose up. And then Herod the king commanding the Lord to be brought, saying to them, "Whatever I commanded you to do to him, do." And Joseph the friend of Pilate and of the Lord stood there, and seeing that they were about to crucify him, he came to Pilate and asked for the body of the Lord for burial. And Pilate sent to Herod [and] asked for his body. And Herod said, "Brother Pilate, even if somebody had not asked for him, we would have buried him, since also Sabbath is dawning. For it is written in the law, 'The sun should not set on one who has been put to death.'" And he handed him over to the people before the first day of the unleavened bread, their festival. (Akhmîm fragment 1:1–2:5)

The author of the gospel fragment makes it clear that it was the Jewish tetrarch,[51] Herod Antipas, who ignored Pilate's objection and condemned Jesus. The appearance of Antipas in the Akhmîm gospel fragment suggests acquaintance with the Gospel of Luke, for only Luke says Antipas was in Jerusalem when Jesus was arrested. According to Luke 23:6–12 it is because Jesus' home province was Galilee that Antipas was given an

("The details which are characteristic of the Akhmîm fragment reflect only the personal views of the author and common ideas from his time").

50. Foster, "Passion Traditions," 69.

51. Antipas' title, "tetrarch," is attested in Josephus and in inscriptions dedicated in his honour on Cos and Delos, which were erected respectively by a certain Philo and by the Athenian people. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols.; ed. and trans. G. Vermes et al., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–87), 1:341 n. 1.

opportunity to question and ridicule Jesus during his hearing before the Roman governor. However, the author of the Akhmîm fragment retells the Lukan narrative and presents Antipas as the sole authority presiding over the execution of Jesus.[52] According to the fragment and in sharp contrast to the four canonical gospels, it is Herod Antipas not Pilate who condemns Jesus to death (1:2).

An angry Jewish mob carries out the wishes of Antipas: Οἱ δὲ λαβόντες τὸν κῦ ὤθουν αὐτῶν τρέχοντες, καὶ ἔλεγον· Σύρωμεν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θῦ, ἐξουσίαν αὐτοῦ ἐσχηκότες ("So those taking the Lord were pushing him while running along, and they were saying, 'Let us drag the son of God having authority over him'"). A number of other details could be mentioned, but what has been cited is sufficient to show that the narrative of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment coheres with the sharp polemic and anti-Semitism attested in some of the writings of the early eastern Fathers. Both the Fathers and the Gospel fragment shift the blame for Jesus' death away from Roman authority to Jewish authority. As if to drive home this point, the gospel fragment tells us that it was the Jews not Pilate who rejoiced at the death of Jesus: ἐχάρησαν δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ δεδώκασῖ[ν] τῷ Ἰωσὴφ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἵνα αὐτὸ θάψη ἐπειδὴ θεασάμενος ἦν ὅσα ἀγαθὰ ἐποίησεν ("And the Jews rejoiced and gave to Joseph his body that he might bury it," 6:23). The righteous Joseph, in stark contrast to the rest of the Jews in the fragment's narrative, is willing to bury Jesus, for "he had seen all the good that he had done."

3. *Second-Century Polemic and Apologetic*

In an earlier chapter, I noted that resurrection faith lay at the centre of the Christian movement from its very beginning and in the second century became the focus of the new movement's apologetic.[53] Pagan attempts

52. Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 102: "C'est Hérode, le roi des Juifs, qui prononce la condamnation de Jésus et ordonne son execution (§5). Pilate, le représentant de Rome, n'a point de responsabilité dans cette affaire (§1). Il peut en toute assurance affirmer qu'il est 'pur du sang du Fils de Dieu' (§46)" ("It is Herod, the king of the Jews, who pronounces the condemnation of Jesus and orders his execution [v. 5]. Pilate, the representative of Rome, has no responsibility in this matter [v. 1]. He can with complete assurance confirm that he is 'pure of the blood of the Son of God' [v. 46]").

53. See Markus Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). Arguing along very different lines, Vinzent has reached a similar conclusion. He too believes resurrection apologetic took on new urgency in the middle of the second century. For Vinzent, however, this

to discredit early Christian beliefs, especially the notion of bodily resurrection, came to clear and forceful expression in the second century. The pagan philosopher Celsus presented an ardent and comprehensive philosophical attack on Christianity entitled *The True Doctrine* written probably between 175–181 CE. Celsus' work is extant only in Origen's third-century response entitled *Contra Celsum*.[54] Most scholars believe that Origen reproduced 70–75 per cent of *The True Doctrine*.[55] Robert Wilken sums up the essence of Celsus' polemic: the "early Christians cannot produce reliable witnesses to the events they claim took place."[56]

Second-century Roman writers sometimes described early Christianity as a *superstitio*, that is, a dubious religion or form of fanaticism.[57] According to Wilken *superstitio* "in its most common and familiar sense, referred to beliefs and practices that were foreign and strange to the Romans."[58] According to Eric Dodds, "No Christian doctrine was more shocking to educated men than the resurrection of the body."[59] Russ

apologetic was brought on more by Marcion's views on what constituted authoritative scripture. I take no position on this point, but it is viewed with misgivings in a review essay by James Carleton Paget, "Marcion and the Resurrection: Some Thoughts on a Recent Book," *JSNT* 35 (2012): 74–102.

54. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, preface 1–4. For the critical edition, see Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953). *On the True Doctrine* has been reconstructed from *Contra Celsum* by R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Celsus on the True Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). On Celsus, see Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (2d ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 116–21.

55. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 44–45; Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149.

56. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 111.

57. With reference to Emperor Nero we are told: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition [*superstitionis novae ac malifcae*]" (Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2). Similarly in Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44: Nero punished Christians, named after one Christus; "though the deadly and backward superstition [*exitiabilis superstitio rursum*] had been stifled for a while, there was now another outbreak." In his correspondence with Emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger describes the Christian faith as nothing more than a "depraved and excessive superstition [*superstitionem pravam et immodicam*]" (*Epistles* 10.96.8). There is nothing neutral in the word *superstitio*. Elsewhere Pliny speaks of a colleague who consults soothsayers (*haruspices*), which he regards as a "gross superstition [*nimia superstitione*]" on his part (*Epistles* 6.2.2).

58. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 50.

59. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, 130.

Dudrey states, "A survey of the canonical Gospel accounts, best done by looking across the columns of a harmony of the Gospels, reveals numerous places where the [resurrection] accounts were vulnerable to attack by unsympathetic pagan readers."[60] Dudrey's description of the Akhmîm gospel fragment as an "embarrassed Christian attempt to fix the perceived problems of the [resurrection account]" is justified.[61] Greco-Roman pagan thinkers declared that the accounts of Jesus' resurrection were rife with inconsistencies, contradictions, and altogether unreliable because they are based on the female witnesses. Let us consider some of the harshest criticisms. I begin with Celsus.

a. *Celsus*

According to Celsus, the Christian ideas of incarnation and resurrection are absurd. What sort of god would appear on earth as a mere mortal and then suffer? Why should a god need or want a physical body? True divinity is immune from pain. Celsus asserts:

> For God does not suffer, and God cannot be humiliated… But what kind of God is it who "comes down" to earth and brings fire along with him? As Plato has taught, God is that which is beautiful and happy and exists within himself in the most perfect of all conceivable states… A god who comes down to men undergoes change—a change from good to bad; from beautiful to shameful; from happiness to misfortune; from what is perfect to what is wicked. Now what sort of a god would choose to change like that?… Accordingly, it cannot be the case that God came down to earth, since in so doing he would have undergone an alternation of his nature… Now if the Christians worshiped only one God they might have reason on their side. But as a matter of fact they worship a man who appeared only recently.[62]

The Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus is especially offensive. The idea is repulsive and in any case impossible. No god would have anything to do with it:

> But they [the Christians] say those long since dead will rise up from the earth possessing the same bodies as they did before. I ask you: is this not the hope of worms? For what sort of human soul is it that has any use for a rotted corpse of a body…it is nothing less than nauseating and impossible. I mean, what sort

60. Russ Dudrey, "What the Writers Should Have Done Better: A Case for the Resurrection of Jesus Based on Ancient Criticisms of the Resurrection Reports," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 3 (2000): 55–78, here 68.

61. Ibid., 75.

62. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 77–78, 107, 116; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.5–19; 8.2.

> of body is it that could return to its original nature or become the same as it was before it rotted away? … a god does not filthy himself as the Christians say their Christ did.[63]

Celsus sees Jesus as a coward, whose prayer in Gethsemane portrays him fearfully begging for his life. "Why does he cry: 'Father, if only this cup could pass by me!' A fine God indeed who fears what he is supposed to conquer."[64] This cowardice of Jesus is the primary reason that Jesus' own disciples fled from him at the arrest and crucifixion, did not believe him, and betrayed him: "Your case is made the harder because not even his disciples believed him at the time of his humiliation."[65] Jesus' lack of fortitude and heroism when facing the cross is the main reason for the disciples' disbelief: "Would a god—a saviour, as you say, and son of the Most High God—be betrayed by the very men who had been taught by him and shared everything with him? What an absurdity…"[66] Even Jesus' own followers did not believe in him until they manufactured the story of his abandonment from the grave:

> Have you forgotten that while he lived this Jesus convinced nobody—not even his own disciples—of his divinity, and was punished shamefully for his blasphemies? Were he a god he should not have died, if only to convince others for good and all that he was no liar; but die he did—not only that, but died a death that can hardly be accounted an example to men.[67]

The author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment responds to this criticism by recasting the resurrection tradition providing an explanation for the disciples' fear and desertion of Jesus (Akhmîm fragment 7:26–27): "But I with my companions was grieved, and being wounded in mind we hid. For we were being sought by them as evildoers and as those wishing to burn the temple. But through all of these things we were fasting and were sitting, mourning and weeping night and day until the Sabbath." The pious disciples were forced into hiding because of a false allegation, accusing them of desiring to "burn the temple." Moreover, the disciples

63. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 86, 107; Origen *Contra Celsum* 7.13. For comments regarding the resurrection of the flesh of Christ, see Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 72; Origen *Contra Celsumi* 3.34–43. For comments regarding the resurrection of the flesh of believers, see Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 81, 86–87, 96, 107–12, 121; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.56; 5.14; 6.39, 72; 7.31–46; 8.49–50.

64. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 63–64.

65. Ibid., 66.

66. Ibid., 61–62.

67. Ibid., 65. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.21, 39.

are portrayed as piously fasting with deep emotions awaiting the Sabbath morn. Therefore, according to the Akhmîm gospel fragment the disciples were forced into hiding because of the pursuit of the Jews, not because of unbelief or doubts in regard to their master.[68] They did not, says Vaganay, "flee as cowards."[69]

Celsus exclaimed, "No wise man believes the gospel."[70] If Jesus were God, he would have appeared to the illustrious men and intelligentsia of the empire. Celsus exclaims that Jesus should have appeared to his Jewish and Roman enemies. The Christian notion of resurrection is anti-philosophical and anti-intellectual—not to mention irrational. The default Christian response to public discourse is, according to Celsus, "Do not ask questions; just believe."[71] Dudrey puts the criticism of Celsus into context: "This is not mere intellectual snobbery on Celsus' part: the social dynamics of the Greco-Roman world were dominated by questions of status and public dignity. Jesus had none, and neither did his followers."[72]

Indeed, the Akhmîm gospel fragment secures the resurrection tradition with a Roman governor and Centurion, Petronius, who refers to Jesus as the "Son of God" (Akhmîm fragment 11:45-46). The author redacts the chronology and asserts that the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection are Romans, officials no less! While Pilate is exonerated from the death of Jesus, saying, "I am clean from the blood of the son of God," the Jewish leaders, having only moments earlier witnessed a vindicated Jesus, with a body supernaturally changed and reaching a height that surpassed the clouds (Akhmîm fragment 10:40), asked Pilate to charge his Roman security detachment to lie about witnessing the resurrection of Jesus; "Therefore, Pilate ordered the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing" (Akhmîm fragment 11:49). It is important to note that Matthew's earlier story, in which the soldiers were bribed to spread the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus while the guards slept (Matt 28:11–15), has been dropped. The guards could hardly serve as credible witnesses if they had been asleep.

68. Rightly observed by Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 93: "Dans les deux péricopes… Pierre est à l'honneur. Il parle au nom des 'Douze' et son discours n'a d'autre but que de justifier la conduite du collège apostolique" ("In the two pericopes… Peter is honored. He speaks in the name of the 'Twelve' and his discourse has no other goal than to justify the leadership of the apostolic assembly").

69. Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 93: *comme des lâches*.

70. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 75; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.73.

71. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 54; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.9, 12. See also Dodds, *Pagan and Christian*, 121.

72. Dudrey, "What the Writers Should Have Done Better," 61.

No belief is more devious, full of contradictions and open to criticism, says Celsus, than the report of Jesus' resurrection. Celsus taunts the early Christian movement for the lowbrow attempt to convince the world of Jesus' resurrection, yet without the provision of eyewitnesses. Fools and women are to blame for purporting that Jesus was risen:

> But who really saw [the resurrection]? A hysterical woman, as you admit and perhaps one other person—both deluded by his sorcery, or else so wrenched with grief at his failure that they hallucinated him risen from the dead by a sort of wishful thinking. …If this Jesus were trying to convince anyone of his powers, then surely he ought to have appeared first to the Jews who treated him so badly—and to his accusers—indeed to everyone, everywhere. Or better, he might have saved himself the trouble of getting buried and simply have disappeared from the cross. Has there ever been such an incompetent planner: When he was in the body, he was disbelieved but preached to everyone; after his resurrection, apparently wanting to establish a strong faith, he chooses to show himself to one woman and a few comrades only. When he was punished, everyone saw; yet risen from the tomb, almost no one. …This is not my own guessing: I base what I say on your own writings, which are self-refuting. What god has ever lived among men who offers disbelief as the proof of his divinity? What god appears in turn only to those who already look for his appearances, and is not even recognized by them?[73]

The Akhmîm gospel fragment seems to reply to this very complaint. According to the fragment, the resurrection was observed by Roman guards and by the very Jewish leaders who had condemned Jesus to death (9:35–11:45). Accordingly, the report of the empty tomb and resurrection no longer rests upon a "hysterical woman…and perhaps one other person," as Celsus puts it. On the contrary, Jesus did appear "first to the Jews who treated him so badly—and to his accusers"! This is not to say that the Gospel fragment was specifically composed as an answer to Celsus, but it does seem to reflect an apologetic retelling of the burial and resurrection of Jesus with the kind of criticism seen in Celsus in mind.[74]

73. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 61–62, 67–69; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.54, 59–75. Sceptics like Celsus reasoned, in the words of Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 91: "Qui donc avait vu de ses yeux le Christ au moment de sa résurrection? Personne" ("Who then saw Christ with their own eyes at the moment of his resurrection? No one").

74. Timothy P. Henderson, *The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics: Rewriting the Story of Jesus' Death, Burial, and Resurrection* (WUNT 301; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 213.

The Akhmîm gospel fragment places Roman soldiers, led by Petronius, at the tomb, accompanied Jewish elders and scribes (Akhmîm fragment 8:31). Canonical details are embellished. The author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment reports that the "centurion and soldiers, all those who were there" watched a great stone seal the tomb (Akhmîm fragment 8:32). In the New Testament gospels it is the women who observe the place where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47). The author of the Akhmîm fragment emphasizes that many eyes "kept watch" on Jesus' tomb after "they spread out seven seals" (Akhmîm fragment 8:33). By providing credible witnesses the Akhmîm gospel fragment eliminates grounds for the kind of doubt put forward by sceptics like Celsus.[75] The Jewish leaders were not in a hurry to leave the place of burial; instead, they were "pitching a tent there" (Akhmîm fragment 8:33). The fragment removes all doubt by providing several credible witnesses. The Akhmîm gospel fragment further accentuates the Matthean apologetic by showing that there is no way the disciples could have stolen the body. The disciples fled and were fasting; meanwhile the tomb of Jesus was constantly under observation, making it impossible for the disciples (or for any other grave robbers) to remove the body of Jesus (as was rumoured in Matt 28:11–15).

Celsus finds it strange that Jesus could not open his own tomb. Why would he need angelic assistance if he truly was divine? It is interesting that Celsus compares the empty tomb of Jesus with the tomb of Zeus on Crete: "we mock those who worship Zeus since his tomb is exhibited in Crete—not knowing how and why they do it—and we nonetheless worship the one who left the tomb" (3.43).[76] Celsus is highly critical of the class of people who witnessed Jesus' appearances: "If Jesus wanted to really manifest his divine power, he should have appeared to those who abused him, to the one who condemned him, and in short to everyone" (2.63). John Cook states this is "one of the only cases in which Celsus makes a possible reference to Pilate, but even here it is not clear."[77] In my view, "the one who condemned him" is probably Pilate (and not, for example, the Jewish high priest). If while alive, Jesus preached publicly, why in his resurrected and glorified state did he not show himself to more people (2.70)? This too is answered in the narrative of the Akhmîm gospel

75. As Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 91, puts it: "Le pseudo-Pierre semble avoir eu conscience de ces objections possibles" ("Pseudo-Peter seems to have been conscious of these possible objections").

76. *A Hymn to Zeus* 8–9.

77. John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 57.

fragment: the very authorities that had condemned Jesus to the cross saw him emerge from the tomb, a towering figure whose head reached the very heavens (Akhmîm fragment 10:40).[78]

I believe Timothy Henderson is correct in thinking that there is probably "not any type of direct connection between the *GPet* and the Jewish source of Celsus, as if the *GPet* is responding specifically to the objections from the source used by Celsus." Henderson sees Celsus' polemic as representative of the sceptical climate circulating and known to the author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment.[79] The fragment is an apologetic reaction to the pagan critique(s), such as we see in Celsus, specifically in reference to credibility of the resurrection story. The apologetic of the Akhmîm fragment might not have had Celsus specifically in mind, but it did have in mind someone similar to him.

b. *Porphyry*

Porphyry (ca. 232–303 CE) was a native of Tyre, and in his youth heard Origen preach, studied Hebrew scripture, especially the gospels, and found them lacking in literary quality and philosophical sophistication.[80] Porphyry was eighteen when the persecution broke out under emperor Decius. Although at one time sympathetic toward Jesus and the Christian movement, he later developed an intense hatred for religion—or *superstitio*. Akin to modern-day "New Atheists," Porphyry came to regard Christianity as the most pernicious form of disease infecting the empire. His fifteen-book Κατὰ Χριστιανῶν (*Against the Christians*) is preserved in part in the writings of Eusebius and Apollinarius, and especially in the *Apocriticus* composed by Macarius Magnes in the fourth or fifth century.[81] Porphyry echoes several of Celsus' criticisms of Christian beliefs.

78. See Vaganay, *L'Évangile de Pierre*, 91–92. Vaganay notes that the author of the gospel fragment took care to place the Jewish leaders close to the tomb, along with the Roman soldiers. In this way it would be impossible to challenge their testimony, for they saw everything clearly and discussed the matter among themselves.

79. Henderson, *The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics*, 213.

80. Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 16.

81. Adolf von Harnack, *Gegen die Christen* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1916). Since the appearance of Harnack's collection, a number of studies have appeared variously defending or attacking the German historian's conclusions. The scholarly opinion is divided over whether the pagan of Macarius' dialogue is Porphyry, a transcriber of Porphyry or another. This study presupposes the traditional conclusion of Harnack's, that Macarius was responding to Porphyry.

Like Celsus, Porphyry claims that the Gospels' portraits of the death of Jesus are absurd and are not based on credible eyewitnesses, as seen by their contradictions and the lack of first-hand reports:

> The evangelists were fiction writers—not observers or eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. Each of the four contradicts the other in writing his account of the events an of his suffering and crucifixion… Based on these contradictory and second-hand reports, one might think this describes not the suffering of a single individual but of several! Where one says "Into your hands I will deliver my spirit," another says "It is finished" and another "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," and another "My God, my God why do you punish me."[82]

The Akhmîm gospel fragment counters this sort of criticism by claiming that the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection were a Roman centurion and his soldiers and hostile Jewish elders and scribes, whose testimony can hardly be doubted. Porphyry sees the account of the passion and resurrection of Jesus as a "legend lifted from accounts of several crucifixions" and asks why Jesus did not stare down his enemies after his resurrection. Again, the Akhmîm fragment rebuts the criticism, claiming that Jesus is tall enough to be seen by all and is more than enough to stare down anyone. The impression one receives from the canonical Gospels is that Jesus only appears to the lowly of his day, persons with little social standing and little credibility. Porphyry asks:

> How can a statement be true when it refers to nothing? A man can only witness to something that really happened, not to something fashioned from thin air. There is another way to refute this false opinion concerning the resurrection of [Jesus], which is spoken of everywhere these days. Why did this Jesus (after his crucifixion and rising as your story goes) not appear to Pilate, who had punished him saying he had done nothing worthy of execution, or to the king of the Jews, Herod, or to the high priest of the Jewish people, or to many men at the same time, as for example to the people of renown among the Romans, both senators and others, whose testimony was reliable. (*Apocrit.* 2.14–15)[83]

Instead of appearing to credible witnesses, Porphyry objects, Jesus "appeared to Mary Magdalene, a prostitute who came from some horrible little village and had been possessed by seven demons, and another Mary, equally known, probably a peasant woman, and others who were of no account" (*Apocrit.* 2.15).

82. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The Literary Remains* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1994), 32.

83. Ibid., 34. Celsus makes the same point. See Hoffmann, *Celsus*, 65, 67.

It is not surprising then that Porphyry asks "[W]hy did this Jesus not appear to Pilate…or to the king of the Jews, Herod, or to the high priest of the Jewish people, or to many men at the same time?" (*Apocrit.* 2.14). According to the Akhmîm gospel fragment, that is exactly what the risen Jesus did: He appeared to Jewish people of the highest rank and to the Roman guards who reported all to Pilate. Here again we have remarkable coherence between the gospel fragment found in the fifth-century Akhmîm codex and the kind of criticism that something like the second-century *GPet* was trying to rebut.

The pagan's demand for a worthy witness is a protest against witnesses that have no credibility. Echoing Celsus' polemic against women eyewitness tradition in the Gospels, Porphyry adds: "Instead he appeared to Mary Magdalene," etc.[84] Porphyry's most ardent critique parallels the physical persecutions of the third century: "They seek riches and glory. Far from being friends of the empire, they are renegades waiting for their chance to seize control."[85] The Christians are seen as subversive and corrosive throughout the empire.

The chronology of the appearance tradition is cast in a new way in the *GPet*. Only after the Jewish and Roman leaders have seen the resurrected "son of God," do the women fearfully venture to the tomb (Akhmîm fragment 12:50–52). The narrator again reminds his audience that the stone was "great" (12:54) and the women were concerned about moving the stone, fearful the Jews would see them visiting, and decided to mourn when they returned home (12:52–54).

As explained in Chapter 5, the Greek Platonic notion of the immortality of the soul held that only mind and spirit could know God. The physical body was limiting, utterly useless. Socrates held that one could become a star in the afterlife. Clearly, Platonic thinking is presupposed by Porphyry:

> It is preposterous to think that when the whole [race] is destroyed there follows a resurrection; that [God] raises with a wave of his hand a man who died three years before the resurrection [of Jesus] and those who like Priam and Nestor who lived a thousand years before, together with those who lived when the human race was new. Just to think of this silly teaching makes me light-headed. Many have perished at sea; their bodies have been eaten by scavenging fish. Hunters have been eaten by their prey, the wild animals, and birds. How will their bodies rise up?[86]

84. Hoffmann, *Porphyry's Against the Christians*, 34.
85. Ibid., 29.
86. Ibid., 90.

With similar arguments, the resurrection is mocked and attacked by other thinkers from late antiquity, whose views can be found in the writings of several Fathers of the Church (see Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration* 5; Lactantius, *Institutes* 4.16; 5.2; and Libanius, *Oration* 18.178; cf. Lucian, *Peregrinus* 11). In the thinking of pagan Romans the Christian message of resurrection was mysterious, if not unfathomable. The New Testament itself attests this Greco-Roman aversion to resurrection belief. We see this among Christians in Corinth, perhaps influenced by the Platonic notion of the soul, who persisted in their belief that there was no resurrection (1 Cor 15:12); perhaps also in the reference to Hymanaeus and Philetus, men who evidently allegorized the resurrection by declaring the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim 2:18). Paganism is clearly in evidence when Paul was "mocked" on Mars Hill for proclaiming the resurrection (Acts 17:32).

The New Testament Gospel narratives have apparent gaps and difficulties in the resurrection tradition. Only Matthew's tradition mentions the guard at the tomb and the seal on the burial stone; only Lukan tradition narrates Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–25). The later Johannine tradition exclusively mentions Nicodemus's involvement in the burial of Jesus, Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1, 11–18), Peter and John's run to the empty tomb (20:3–10), Thomas's challenge that unless he met the risen Christ he would not believe (20:24–29), the disciples going back to their previous vocation as fishermen (21:4–6), and Peter's restoration over Jesus' breakfast (21:7–19).

The tradition contains a number of discrepancies in incidental details, which left the canonical narratives open to attack: (1) which women visited the tomb on Easter morning? The Markan tradition reports three women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mark 16:1). The Matthean tradition casts two women, Mary Magdalene, and the "other" Mary (Matt 28:1). The Lukan tradition portrays at least five women—two Marys and Joana—and adds "the other women" without any more specificity (Luke 24:1, 10). (2) The canonical tradition does not agree with regard to the angels announcing the resurrection: Mark tells of a "young man" (Mark 16:5), while Luke mentions two dazzling angels (Luke 24:4); Matthew, like Mark, has one "angel of the Lord" at the resurrection tomb without mentioning a youth (Matt 28:2–3); and the Johannine narrative omits the angel(s) altogether. (3) There is some geographical confusion regarding the whereabouts of the resurrection appearances: were they in Galilee or in Jerusalem? The extant Markan tradition has no appearances; the text in its current form does not fulfil

Jesus' most important Markan prediction of resurrection. In Mark 16:5 the disciples are told that Jesus will meet them in Galilee (Mark 16:5). The Luke–Acts narrative appearances occur exclusively around Jerusalem (Luke 24:36–41; Acts 1:6–11). The Matthean and Johannine tradition present Jesus' post-mortem appearances in Jerusalem and Galilee (Matt 28:1–10, 16; John 20–21).

Julian pointed out several contradictions in the synoptic resurrection account.[87] According to Cyril, Julian

> wrote that the holy evangelists contradict themselves when they say: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (following Matt 28:11), late on the Sabbath when the first of the week began to dawn, came to the tomb; according to Mark [16:2], however, after it began to be daylight and the sun had risen. And according to Matthew they saw an angel [28:2]; according to Mark a young man [16:5]; and according to Matthew they left and told the disciples about the resurrection of Christ [28:8]—according to Mark they were silent and told no one anything [16:8]. By means of these things he brings censure on the holy scriptures and says that they contradict each other.[88]

The canonical traditions give no eyewitnesses of the resurrection event itself, only of the discovery of the empty tomb, the presence of angel(s), and the appearances of Jesus. In the Matthean account, Roman soldiers observe an angel descending from heaven, who rolls away the stone and sits upon it. We have the tomb opening, soldiers observing, and an empty tomb; however, nobody sees Jesus rise from the dead. According to the Synoptic tradition, we are left wondering where Jesus is, "Why seek the living with the dead? He is not here, he is risen" (Mark 16:6; Matt 28:6; Luke 24:5).

Despite the fact that the enemies of Jesus knew of the resurrection, only Jesus' allies are witnesses of the empty tomb. Initially we are told of at least five women; later we hear of Peter and John visiting the empty tomb. The testimony of the earliest witnesses in the canonical tradition, women, would not be permissible in Jewish or Roman courts. We are dependant on the later Johannine tradition for a male account of an empty tomb, that of Peter and John (John 20:1–10). Mark and Matthew do not reflect this tradition, and Lukan tradition provides limited detail of Peter's visit to the tomb (Luke 24:12). Other than Peter, as described in Luke 24:12, and Peter and John in the Johannine narrative (John 20:1–10), the earliest witnesses of Jesus resurrection are women, who in late antiquity were

87. Cook, *Greco-Roman Paganism*, 300.

88. As preserved in one of the Syriac fragments of Cyril's work against Julian. See ibid., 300.

thought of as dubious. Why do all the followers of Jesus, except John "who saw and believed" (John 20:8–9), expect to find Jesus' corpse in the tomb? The Johannine tradition presents the disciples wondering if grave robbers have stolen him away (John 20:2, 13–15). When the risen Jesus appears in the Upper Room, the apostles are chastised for unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe the women's report that he had risen (Luke 24:11, 13–35).

The apologetic of the Akhmîm Gospel fragment is easily understood as a response to the kind of pagan criticism levelled against Christians, for instance by Celsus, whose *True Doctrine* (ca. 178 CE) rejects the resurrection story because there were no eyewitnesses and the empty tomb was discovered by hysterical women. The Gospel fragment rebuts this criticism by providing eyewitnesses (hostile ones at that), who possess much more credibility than women. These witnesses are Roman guards and Jewish elders, who see the angels enter the tomb and lead Jesus out. In the extant fragment of the *GPet*, Roman and Jewish authorities witness Jesus' resurrection. Jesus appears as a vindicated man. The disciples' initial fear is accounted for—they were not afraid of of losing Jesus per se, but of being pursued by the Jews. The chronology of post-mortem events is transposed in the second-century context to answer scepticism of Jesus' resurrection. Only after the social elite have experienced the resurrected Jesus do the women and disciples witness the empty tomb. Pontius Pilate is unwilling to crucify Jesus and the blame is shifted to Herod. Therefore, we see some significant evidence of cultural, political, and social coherence between apologetic elements in the *GPet* and second-century pagan scepticism.

c. *Trypho and the Synagogue*

Before moving to the next section of this chapter, a few words need to be said about the Jewish polemic directed against Christians and the apologetic that was developed to combat it. Justin Martyr has already been discussed in reference to the anti-Semitism of his time. I return to him here because he takes up the question of the empty tomb and the allegation that the disciples had illegally removed the body of Jesus. The accusation is an old one and seems to have been a staple in the synagogue's polemic against the new faith.

In Mark, the oldest gospel, nothing is said about a guard posted at the tomb of Jesus. All that the evangelist relates is that Joseph of Arimathea requests the body of Jesus. He is permitted to take the body down from the cross, prepare it for burial, and then place it in a tomb. We are told that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body

was laid (Mark 15:42–47). Early Sunday morning the women return to the tomb, bearing spices that they might anoint the corpse. They find the tomb empty and are startled by a young man and his strange message (16:1–8). It would not be too difficult to throw doubt on a story such as this, especially when we keep in mind Jewish burial traditions.[89] According to these traditions, with which Roman law in Judea complied, the body of an executed person was to be placed in a tomb of dishonour, a tomb reserved for this purpose. The body of such a person could not be placed in a tomb of honour (such as the family tomb). The well-known Nazareth inscription is relevant here, not because it directly relates to Jewish law and practice, but because it illustrates how seriously Rome itself viewed burial of the dead. Illicit removal of corpses was a serious offence. The inscription (*SEG* VIII no. 13) reads as follows:

> Ordinance of Caesar: It is my pleasure that graves and tombs—whoever has made them as a pious service for ancestors or children or members of their house—that these remain unmolested in perpetuity. But if any person lay information that another either has destroyed them, or has in any other way cast out the bodies which have been buried there, or with malicious deception has transferred them to other places, to the dishonour of those buried there, or has removed the headstones or other stones, in such a case I command that a trial be instituted, just as if they were concerned with the gods for the pious services of mortals. For beyond all else it shall be obligatory to honour those who have been buried. Let no one remove them for any reason. If not, however (i.e., if anyone does so), capital punishment on the charge of tomb robbery I will to take place.[90]

89. For a description of Jewish burial traditions, along with relevant source material, see Johnston and Evans, "Resurrection"; C. A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 17–30; idem, "Jewish Burial Traditions."

90. C. A. Evans states, "The date of the inscription is unknown, but most epigraphers think it is from the first century, though possibly from just before the turn of the era. The unqualified use of "Caesar" favours identification with Augustus." See Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the Ossuaries," *BBR* 13 (2003): 21–46. For critical discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," in *New Testament Studies: Philological, Versional, and Patristic* (NTTS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 75–92; Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE)* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 159–60; Laura Boffo, *Iscrizioni greche e latine per lo studio della Bibbia* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1994), 319–33; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1293–94.

Caesar's ordinance testifies bluntly to the sanctity of sepulture in late antiquity. Of great interest are the lines that expressly forbid unlawfully transferring bodies to other places. This law complements the Jewish law. However, Jewish law did allow for bodies of the executed to be transferred to places of honour (i.e. family tombs) one year after death.

Not only was the body of a criminal forbidden burial in a place of honour, no public mourning was permitted; no music and no noisy lamentation. The custodian at the place of burial reserved for criminals enforced these regulations. The story as told in the Gospel of Mark coheres with these burial traditions. The women observe where the corpse of Jesus was placed. This was necessary, because the body of Jesus was not placed in a tomb belonging to his family or to one of his disciples. His body was taken to a place of dishonour, but which place precisely the women could not know apart from personal observation. They return after the Sabbath, that is, Sunday morning. They bring spices to anoint the body of Jesus, in order to mask the stench of decomposition, which in turn would make it possible to mourn (quietly) within the tomb itself, as Jewish law and custom permitted. They wonder who might be willing to assist them in removing the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb. When they arrive, they find the tomb open and the corpse of Jesus missing.

It would require little imagination for Jewish sceptics to suppose that the body had been removed from the place of dishonour by family or friends of Jesus. They would be motivated to do so, to guarantee control of the corpse, so that its eventual burial in the family tomb could be assured. Of course, the corpse might have been removed by the authorities themselves, having learned that Joseph of Arimathea had placed it in a tomb not yet used, rather than in one previously used (and therefore "contaminated") for the burial of executed criminals. The discovery of the tomb empty, therefore, posed no mystery.

It is not surprising then that the Matthean evangelist speaks to this vulnerable point in the Easter story. He does so by introducing a guard, to protect against the theft of the body of Jesus:

> Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore order the sepulchre to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the sepulchre secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. (Matt 27:62–66)

The way this story is told clearly reflects the allegation that later would be made, viz., that the disciples of Jesus in fact did steal the body and did fraudulently proclaim the resurrection. And of course that is exactly what happens on Easter Sunday. The resurrection takes place, the guards faint at the sight of the angel who rolled away the stone (Matt 28:4) and then are bribed by the ruling priests to tell the people, "His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep" (Matt 28:11–15).

It is to this tradition that Justin Martyr refers in his engagement with Trypho the Jew. Justin charges Trypho and his fellow Jewish sceptics:

> …yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that he arose from the dead, but, as I said before, you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive people by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. (*Dial.* 108)

The vehemence with which Justin speaks suggests that the accusation of grave robbery (of which Roman authorities would take a very dim view) was still very much current in the middle of the second century. Justin does not belabour the question of eyewitness testimony, only the falsity and injustice of the accusation.[91]

For all his passion, Justin appears to be unaware of the weakness of the Matthean narrative. The guards may have been bribed to spread the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus, while they—the guards—were asleep. If the guards had been sleeping, they would have had no idea what had happened, including the resurrection. Strangely, Matthew says they saw the angel descend and roll aside the stone, but they did not see the risen Jesus himself. Of what, then, are they witnesses?

The problem is partly remedied by the author of the *Acts of Pilate*, whose engaging apocryphal work was probably composed about the same time the *GPet* was composed. In the narrative of the *Acts of Pilate* the

91. Justin obviously accepts at face value the Matthean narrative. In the passage quoted Justin remarks, "as I said before." He refers to his earlier charge that Jewish emissaries have been sent throughout the world to slander the Christian movement: "…when you knew that he had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven…you selected and sent out from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up… Accordingly, you displayed great zeal in publishing throughout all the land bitter and dark and unjust things against the only blameless and righteous Light sent by God" (*Dial.* 17).

guards remain fully conscious and attentive when the angel of the Lord descends.[92] They witness—and therefore confirm—what the canonical evangelists relate. The guards tell the ruling priests:

> We saw an angel descend from heaven, and he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the cave, and sat upon it, and he shone like snow and like lightning. And we were in great fear, and lay like dead men. And we heard the voice of the angel speaking to the women who waited at the tomb: "Do not be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, as he said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and is in Galilee." (*Acts of Pilate* 13:1)

To be sure, the *Acts of Pilate* takes the Matthean story to the next level. But the guards did not observe the resurrection itself.

It is the Akhmîm gospel fragment that fully remedies the problem. Not only do the guards remain awake and alert (and are accompanied by Jewish elders), not only do they witness the descent of the angel (now two angels, not one), they witness the risen Jesus emerge from the tomb. And what they witness is astounding: two angels enter the tomb and then exit from the tomb supporting a third man. The heads of the angels reach the heavens, the head of the third man rises above the heavens (Akhmîm fragment 10:39–40).

The Akhmîm gospel fragment appears to represent a major and novel development in Christian apologetic, in which an answer is given to sceptics whose objections were based on the absence of witnesses of the resurrection event itself. We observe an evolution from Matthew, who counters the Jewish charge that the body of Jesus had been illegally removed by his disciples, to the embellishment in the *Acts of Pilate*, whereby the guards confirm the narrative of the canonical Gospels, and then finally to the narrative of the Akhmîm gospel fragment, in which the guards are joined by the ruling priests (the original conspirators of the stolen body charge) and become eyewitnesses of the resurrection event itself. The testimony of the resurrection of Jesus no longer rests on the mere discovery of an empty tomb or on reports of frightened women.

92. According to Matt 28:4 the guards were so afraid of the sight of the angel that "they became like dead men" (ἐγενήθησαν ὡς νεκροί). What precisely this description implies is difficult to tell. At the very least it suggests that the guards were incapacitated and so could not interfere with the angel and his communication with the women. It could also imply that the guards momentarily lost consciousness.

d. *The Problem of the Women*

I conclude the present section with a brief discussion of the problem that the tradition of the women as first witnesses of the Easter event created for the early Church. Aspects of this problem have already been touched on. Obviously the tradition of the women as first witnesses gave sceptics, especially pagan sceptics, rich opportunities to cast doubt on the veracity of the astounding claim that Jesus, crucified by order of the Roman governor, had been raised from the dead.

That the tradition of the women as first witnesses was almost from the beginning perceived as problematic is attested in the writings of the New Testament itself. In his confession of the gospel Paul reminds the Christians of Corinth "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve…" (1 Cor 15:3–5). Paul goes on to mention other witnesses of the risen Jesus, but not once does he specifically mention women. This omission is somewhat surprising given Paul's egalitarian pronouncement in Gal 3:28 and frequent mention of women, often recognized as leaders, in his letters (e.g. Rom 16:1–7; Phil 4:2–3). Commentators usually point out that Paul's omission of the women in 1 Cor 15:1–8 is hardly surprising, given the negative view of women as witnesses in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds and the apologetic purpose of the passage.[93] Admittedly, to have appealed to the resurrection appearances to the women would have undermined Paul's argument.

Paul is not alone in failing to mention the women who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter says to his audience: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses [πάντες ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν μάρτυρες]" (Acts 2:32). Although it is possible women are included, it is unlikely. The "we" who are witnesses are the apostles, that is, the eleven plus Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:12–26).

The New Testament gospels themselves give evidence of the unease with which the early Church viewed the priority of women in the tradition.[94]

93. For a summary of this argument, along with bibliography, see Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 259. See also the comments in Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 607–8; Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 249–55. For a critical assessment of the role of the woman in the gospel narratives, see Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus* (AnBib 45; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1970).

94. In his *Diatessaron* (his harmony of the four gospels) Tatian has Jesus appear first to Mary the mother of Jesus and then second to Mary of Magdala, evidently

Some years ago Claudia Setzer reviewed this development.[95] She observes that despite the embarrassment, the tradition of the priority of women, especially that of Mary Magdalene, was retained. Even in second-century texts like the *Acts of Pilate* and the Akhmîm gospel fragment (perhaps to be identified with the *GPet*), where resurrection apologetic accentuates the role of male witnesses, including hostile witnesses, women remain in the picture (see *Acts of Pilate* 13:1; Akhmîm gospel fragment 12:50). Although these texts give evidence of embarrassment, Setzer rightly remarks, "these texts also reveal the singular importance and indispensability of Mary Magdalene (and others) to the earliest resurrection story."[96]

It is intriguing to consider that despite the inherent liability of having women play a key role in the resurrection story, the tellers of the gospel story simply could not or would not eliminate this component. Apostolic figures such as Paul or the Peter of the book of Acts might fail to mention the women, but when the story as such was told, even if edited and expanded to include more prominent roles for men and hostile witnesses, Mary Magdalene and other women remained. The implication of this observation, as Wright and others have concluded, is that the story is firmly founded on ancient and reliable tradition. Polemic and apologetic needs may result in the editing and embellishing of the story, but the core elements are retained.

to avoid the criticism of Celsus that the resurrection was witnessed by a hysterical woman who once had been demon possessed. See Tjitze Baarda, "'Jesus and Mary' (John 20,16f.) in the Second Epistle on Virginity ascribed to Clement," in W. Schrage (ed.), *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Heinrich Greeven* (BZNW 47; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 11–34; and idem, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ: Factors in the Harmonization of the Gospels, Especially in the Diatessaron of Tatian," in W. L. Petersen (ed.), *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 3; Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 133–54, esp. 154. The Greek words ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ and ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ mean "discord" and "harmony," respectively.

95. Claudia Setzer, "Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection," *JBL* 116 (1997): 259–72.

96. Ibid., 272.

Chapter 8

PUTTING THE AKHMÎM GOSPEL FRAGMENT IN ITS PLACE II: NARRATIVE AND IMAGINATION

In Chapter 7 it was shown that the anti-Semitism of the early to mid-second century and the critical and polemical challenges that second-century Christians faced cohere well with the apologetic strategy in the Akhmîm gospel fragment. The embellishments of the resurrection story in the fragment answer the criticism of sceptics like Celsus and Porphyry. The fragment, moreover, exculpates the Romans and blames the Jewish leaders. There are, however, additional features that suggest that the Akhmîm gospel fragment originated in the second century. These features will be explored in the present chapter.

In the major sections below I analyze the Christology of the Akhmîm fragment. This analysis will show that its Christology fits well with ideas that began to emerge at the beginning of the second century and developed more fully toward the end of this century. I shall also look at the portrait of Pilate the Roman governor of Judaea in the Akhmîm fragment. This analysis overlaps, of course, with some of the discussion in Chapter 7 above. But the point here is to compare the portrait of Pilate in the Akhmîm fragment with the portrait of Pilate and other Roman authorities in second-century Christian literature. We again shall find close coherence. A third section will compare the narrative and plot devices of the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the late first and second-century Greek romances, which focus on apparent deaths. It will be shown that the first-century Christian gospels influenced this literature and that this literature in turn influenced Christian literature in the second century. The final section will treat a number of other points, which all suggest that the Akhmîm gospel fragment dates to the second century and may well be the *GPet*.

1. *Polymorphic Christology and Imagination*

To this point we have observed that the anti-Semitic features and the apologetic strategies of the Akhmîm gospel fragment cohere well with the polemic and points of debate attested in the second century. These correlations alone strongly suggest that the Akhmîm fragment probably does preserve an excerpt of a document that originated in the second century. However, there is another major correlation that ties the Akhmîm fragment to the second century.

In the second century Christian writers began depicting Jesus in a variety of forms. What is envisioned is sometimes only metaphorical or allegorical; sometimes it was to be taken literally. Portraying Jesus in different forms, usually in a post-Easter setting, has been dubbed "polymorphic Christology." The topic has been assessed in a recent study by Paul Foster, who defines the phenomenon in part as the "ability of a figure to undergo metamorphosis into a new form or to appear simultaneously in multiple forms."[1] Jesus appears in a variety of forms in gnostic, pseudepigraphal, and other extra-canonical texts. Through the medium of polymorphism, early Christian writers promoted the theological concept that Jesus transcended the material world. A rather obvious example of this genre appears in the Akhmîm gospel fragment:

> While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw coming out from the tomb three men, and the two were supporting the one, and a cross following them. And the head of the two reached as far as heaven, but that of the one being led by them surpassed the heavens. (10:39–40)

The gospel fragment portrays the risen and vindicated Jesus in a gloriously transformed body. Foster refers to this phenomenon in a proto-orthodox community as signifying that "Jesus…has entered a higher state of physical existence."[2] For the purpose of this study, the study will seek to show that the polymorphism in the Akhmîm gospel fragment coheres with the emergence of polymorphistic traditions in the second century. Foster explains the widespread use of polymorphism in second-century Christian texts:

1. Paul Foster, "Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity," *JTS* 58 (2007): 66–99, quotation 66. Foster appeals to Eric Junod, "Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur," in J. Ries (ed.), *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique* (Publications de l'Institut orientaliste de Louvain, 27; Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1982), 38–46; and Pieter J. Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," in J. N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 97–118.
2. Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 66.

> Such polymorphic appearances are reported chiefly, but not exclusively in post-resurrection contexts. One of the main aspects of such christological formulations is to emphasize that Jesus is not constrained by the material world. This perspective meant that views of Christ that encompassed polymorphism were particularly attractive to docetic and Gnostic groups, since it aided their assertions that the substance of Christ was not of the same order as the rest of the material world. Yet polymorphic understandings of Jesus were also attractive in orthodox writings, often in a more restrained form, especially for describing resurrection encounters, since they were a way of communicating Jesus' transcendence over the realm of death.[3]

The antecedents of second-century polymorphic Christology can be found within New Testament literature itself.[4] Most of these stories and visions concern post-mortem encounters with Jesus. Foster sees these generative beginnings of polymorphisms as important, "[W]hat this variation illustrates is that conceiving of Jesus as a polymorphic being, especially in his resurrected state, was an important means of denoting his ontological status."[5]

In the examples that follow we shall see Jesus depicted in a variety of forms, including that of a giant, child, elderly man, and other forms. These traditions mostly derive from the second century.

a. *Jesus as a Giant*

One of the most astonishing features of the Akhmîm gospel fragment's resurrection narrative is the great height of Jesus and the two men (angels) who assist him from the tomb. The portrait, however, was not unusual in the second century. Exaggerated height is found not only in Christian documents of the time, it is also a relatively common motif in Jewish apocalyptic literature. For the Judeo-Christian communities, adding such extraordinary details to the story of Jesus conveyed a supernatural importance.

3. Ibid., 67.

4. The transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–36); the Emmaus road experience, in which two disciples are unable to recognize the glorified body of Jesus (Luke 24:13–35; Mark 16:12–13); the ability to appear and disappear (John 20:19, 26; cf. Luke 24:36–37; Mark 16:14); Paul's encounter with the risen "Lord" on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–9; 22:3–16; 26:9–18); the ability to evade hostility (Luke 4:30; John 8:59); for critical evaluation of the polymorphic characteristics of these passages, see Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 68–77.

5. Ibid., 68.

In the paragraphs below I compare the portrait found in the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the portraits found in three second-century Christian writings:

> καὶ ἐξηγουμένων αὐτῶν ἃ εἶδον πάλιν ὅρωσιν ἐξελθόντος ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου τρεῖς ἄνδρες καὶ τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθοῦντας καὶ σταυρὸν ἀκολουθοῦντα αὐτοῖς. καὶ τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγουμένου ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσαν τοὺς οὐρανούς.
>
> While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw coming out from the tomb three men, and the two were supporting the one, and a cross following them. And the head of the two reached as far as heaven, but that of the one being led by them surpassed the heavens. (Akhmîm fragment 10:39–40)

> Καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ μικρὸν βλέπω παράταξιν πολλῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐρχομένων· καὶ εἰς τὸ μέσον ἀνήρ τις ὑψηλὸς τῷ μεγέθει, ὥστε τὸν πύργον ὑπερέχειν.
>
> And behold, a little later I saw an array of many men coming, and in the midst a man of such lofty stature that he stood taller than the tower.) (Hermas, *Sim.* 83:1; cf. 74:2[6]

> In their midst was a young man of great stature, taller than any of the others, and on the head of each of them he placed a crown, but he was more exalted than they. And I was held spellbound. Then I asked an angel, "Who are these, my lord?" He answered and said to me, "These are they who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and they have confessed the name of God; now they are being crowned, and receive palms." Then I said to the angel, "Who is that young man who places crowns on them and puts palms in their hands?" He answered and said to me, "He is the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world." So I began to praise those who had stood valiantly for the name of the Lord. Then the angel said to me, "Go, tell my people how great and many are the wonders of the Lord God which you have seen." (2 Esd 2:43–48)[7]

6. The *Shepherd of Hermas* is the longest writing of the apostolic fathers. It appears in three major sections: (five) *Visions*, (twelve) *Mandates*, and (ten) *Similitudes* (or *Parables*). The work, which was composed sometime in the first half of the second century, is a Christian apocalypse comparable to *1 Enoch.* See C. A. Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 272–73.

7. According to Evans, "The original author was probably a first-century Palestinian Jew who, writing in Aramaic or Hebrew, produced chs. 3–14 (the original *4 Ezra*). It was subsequently translated into Greek. A second-century Christian added a Greek introduction (chs. 1–2, which is also called *5 Ezra*); Finally, a third-century Christian added the last two chapters (15–16) in Greek (which is also called

> And sometimes he appeared to me as a small man and unattractive, and then again as one reaching to heaven. (*Acts of John* 89)[8]

The description of Jesus (and the two who accompany him) in the Akhmîm gospel fragment is entirely comparable with the "man of such lofty stature that he stood taller than the tower" in Hermas, the "young man of great stature, taller than any of the others" in 2 Esdras, and the man who appeared "as one reaching to heaven" in the *Acts of John*.

The great stature of Jesus is recalled in later tradition, in Pseudo-Cyprian's Coptic homily on Holy Week.[9] In §78 Jesus is described: "We were afraid and looked and saw the Saviour like a column of fire, and his feet were with us on the mountain but his head reached to the sky, and he was entirely of fire." Elsewhere the Jewish leaders remark that "sometimes he is tall" (§73).[10]

b. *Jesus as a Child, as an Adolescent, as an Old Man*

Jesus appears in a variety of other forms. Thanks to the recently published *Gospel of Judas* and the *Revelation of the Magi* we are now in a position to widen our comparisons. Below are examples from several texts, some of them Gnostic:

> He began to speak with them about the mysteries beyond the world and what would take place at the end. Often he did not appear to the disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child. (*Gospel of Judas*, Codex Tchacos, page 33, lines 15–20)[11]

6 Ezra). The Semitic original is lost, and only a fragment of the Greek has survived (15:57–59). The purpose of the original author was to show that God is just, despite the evil of the Rome of his day and the calamities that had befallen Jerusalem." See Evans, *Ancient Texts*, 11.

8. One of several apocryphal works purportedly written by Leucius Charinus. It was probably written in Greek in the late second or early third century CE.

9. For text, translation, and critical discussion, see Roelof van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem on the Life and the Passion of Christ: A Coptic Apocryphon* (VCSup 118; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

10. Translation from ibid., 53–54. Van den Broek rightly calls attention to the description of the risen Christ in the *GPet*.

11. This is the translation found in Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst (eds.), *The Gospel of Judas*, 20. Note 7 admits to some uncertainty. Revisions appear in subsequent editions. In Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, with François Gaudard (eds.), *The Gospel of Judas* (2d ed.; Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2008), 30, the second sentence of the translation reads: "But often he does not appear to his disciples (as himself), but you find him among them…" Note 8 reviews several

> …the road. And [he spoke to him], saying, "[By which] road [shall I go] up to [Jerusalem]?" The little child [replied, saying,] "Say your name, so that [I may show] you the road." [The little child knew who Paul was. He wished to make conversation with him through his words in order that he might find an excuse for speaking with him. The little child spoke, saying, "I know who you are, Paul. You are he who was blessed from his mother's womb. For I have come to you that you may go up to Jerusalem to your fellow apostles. (*Apoc*. *Paul* 18)[12]

> …a young man, radiant in splendour, appeared and said to them, "Peace be with you." And both Peter and Theon immediately went up and entered the cabin; and Peter took bread and gave thanks to the Lord, who had deemed him worthy of his holy service, and because a young man had appeared to them saying, "Peace be with you." Peter said, "Most excellent and the only Holy One, for you appeared to us, O God Jesus Christ." (*Acts Pet.* 5)[13]

possibilities in Coptic and calls attention to other texts, in which Jesus is depicted as a child (some of which I cite). In Rodolphe Kasser and Gregor Wurst (eds.), *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos: Critical Edition* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2007), 185 (with photographic plate opposite on p. 184), a helpful, critical note is provided. It reads as follows: "The meaning of ⲛ̄ϩⲣ̄ⲟⲩ is unclear. It may be a form of *B* ϣⲣⲟϯ 'child,' a word that is mostly attested as a plural form, but ϣⲣⲟⲩ (once in *B*) and ϣⲣⲱⲧ (once in Old Coptic) do also occur (cf. *Crum* 631 a-b). Alternatively, it may be a form of *B* ϩⲣⲟⲧⲛ̄ or ϩⲣⲟⲩ, 'apparition, phantom,' or even of *S* ⳟⲣⲟⲩ 'veil' (*Crum* 588 b). But it may also be a hitherto unknown word; cf. the *Étude dialectale*." By *Crum* the editors refer to W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), while *Étude dialectale* refers to Rodolphe Kasser, "Étude dialectale: Portant globalement sur les quatre textes coptes du Codex Tchacos," in R. Kasser and G. Wurst (eds.), *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter*, 35–78. *B* refers to the Boharic dialect; *S* refers to the Sahidic dialect.

12. George W. MacRae, William R. Murdock, and Douglas M. Parrott, "The Apocalypse of Paul," in J. M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 255. The *Apocalypse of Paul* is a second or third-century Gnostic apocalyptic judgment text recounting the apostle's ascent above the eight heavens.

13. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 402. Written in Greek (ca. 170–190 CE), the *Acts of Peter* is one of the earliest of the apocryphal acts of the apostles, centring on a contest between Peter and Simon Magus in Rome and on the martyrdom of the apostle.

> [λέγει Ἰη(σοῦ)ς]· οὐκ ἀποκνήσει ἄνθ[ρωπος πλήρης ἡμε]ρῶν ἐπερωτῆσαι πα[ιδίον ἑπτὰ ἡμε]ρῶν περὶ τοῦ τόπου τῆ[ς ζωῆς, καὶ ζή]σετε· ὅτι πολλοὶ ἔσονται π[ρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ] οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι, καὶ [εἰς ἓν καταντήσου]σιν.
>
> Jesus said, "The man old in days will not hesitate to ask a small child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will become one and the same. (*Gos. Thom.* 4)[14]
>
> …Then those who were present inquired about the cause, and were especially perplexed because Drusiana had said, "The Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John and of a youth." (*Acts John* 87)[15]
>
> "And when we left the place, wishing to follow him again, he again appeared to me, bald-headed but with a thick and flowing beard; but to James he appeared as a youth whose beard was just starting…Yet to me there appeared a still more wonderful sight; for I tried to see him as he was, and I never at any time saw his eyes closing but only open. (*Acts John* 89)

14. Helmut Koester and Thomas O. Lambdin, "The Gospel of Thomas," in Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 126. Koester et al. have translated the Coptic text. For the Greek, see Harold W. Attridge, "The Greek Fragments," in B. Layton (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XII,2 Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655*. Vol. 1, *Gospel according to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (Nag Hammadi Studies 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 95–128, here 115. "Quoting or alluding to more than half of the writings of the New Testament (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 John, and Revelation)," as Evans says, "*Thomas* could very well be a collage of New Testament and apocryphal materials, which have been interpreted, often allegorically, in such a way as to advance second and third-century Gnostic ideas." See C. A. Evans, "The Apocryphal Jesus: Assessing the Possibilities and Problems," in C. A. Evans and E. Tov (eds.), *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historic, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 147–72. On New Testament material in *Thomas*, see Craig A. Evans, Robert L. Webb, and Richard A. Wiebe (eds.), *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index* (NTTS 18; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 88–144. Another problem with viewing *Thomas* as early and independent of the New Testament Gospels is the presence of a significant amount of material that is distinctive to Matthew (what is usually called "M"), Luke (what is usually called "L'), and John. Moreover, there is evidence in *Thomas* of contact with second-century CE Syriac traditions, including Tatian's *Diatessaron*. On this point, see Nicolas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Academia Biblica 5; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

15. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 316.

> For Valentinus likewise alleges that he had seen an infant child lately born; and questioning (this child), he proceeded to inquire who it might be. And (the child) replied, saying that he himself is the Logos, and then subjoined a sort of tragic legend; and out of this (Valentinus) wishes the heresy attempted by him to consist. (Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.42.2)[16]

These texts depict the risen Jesus in a number of remarkable ways. In the *Gospel of Judas* and the *Apocalypse of Paul* Jesus appears as a young child. In Valentinian tradition (*apud* Hippolytus) Jesus appears as a newborn infant. In the *Acts of Peter* he appears as a "young man, radiant in splendour," yet Peter readily recognizes him. The *Acts of John* preserves a curious tradition in which one Drusiana says that the "Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John and of a youth." Later in the *Acts of John* the appearance of Jesus alternates between an elderly (implied) "bald-headed but with a thick and flowing beard" and a "youth whose beard was just starting."

In the aforementioned Coptic homily Jesus is described in a variety of ways—during his pre-Passion, pre-Easter existence. The exasperated Jewish leaders say to Judas the betrayer: "How shall we arrest him, for he does not have single shape but his appearance changes. Sometimes he is ruddy, sometimes he is white, sometimes he is red, sometimes he is wheat-coloured, sometimes he is pallid like ascetics, sometimes he is a youth, sometimes an old man, sometimes his hair is straight and black, sometimes it is curled, sometimes he is tall, sometimes he is short. In one word, we have never seen him in one and the same appearance" (§73).[17]

c. *Jesus in Simultaneous Multiple Forms*

Perhaps the most remarkable features of polymorphism are appearances of Jesus in simultaneous multiple forms. Among the most interesting are the depictions in the *Gospel of Philip*, where the appearances match those who behold Jesus. In the *Acts of John* Jesus is in two places at once. Also intriguing are the forms of Jesus in the recently published *Revelation of the Magi*.

> Jesus took them by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which [they would] be able to see him. He appeared to [them all. He appeared] to the great as great. He [appeared] to the small as small. He [appeared to the] angels as an angel, and to men as a man. Because of this his

16. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885–87), 5:93.

17. Translation from van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem*, 54.

> word hid itself from everyone. Some indeed saw him, thinking that they were seeing themselves, but when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount he was not small. He became great, but he made his disciples great, that they might be able to see him in his greatness. (*Gos. Phil*. 57.28–58.10)[18]

> And my Lord stood in the middle of the cave and lit it up, and said, "John, to the multitude down below in Jerusalem I am being crucified, and pierced with lances and reeds, and gall and vinegar is given me to drink. But to you I am speaking, and pay attention to what I say. I put it into your mind to come up to this mountain, so that you might hear matters needful for a disciple to learn from his teacher, and for a man to learn from his God." (*Acts John* 97)[19]

> While we were prostrated, only those widows who were blind stood up. The bright light, however, which appeared to us, entered into their eyes and they regained their sight. Peter said to them, "Tell us what you have seen." They said, "We saw an old man whose appearance we cannot describe to you." Some, however, said, "We saw a young man." Others said, "We say a boy tenderly touching our eyes; thus our eyes were opened." (*Acts Pet* 21)[20]

> I saw him seemingly being seized by them. And I said, "What do I see, O Lord, that it is you yourself whom they take, and that you are grasping me? Or who is this one, glad and laughing on the tree? And is it another one whose feet and hands they are striking?" The Savior said to me, "He whom you saw on the three, glad and laughing, this is the living Jesus. But this one into whose hands and feet they drive the nails is his fleshly part, which is the substitute being put to shame, the one who came into being in his likeness. But look at him and me." (*Apoc. Pet.* 81)[21]

The polymorphism of these texts is truly remarkable. In the *Gospel of Philip* Jesus appears to "the great as great," "to the small as small," to "angels as angels," and "to men as men." Indeed, in looking at him some thought they were looking at themselves. Of great interest is the polymorphism of the *Acts of John*, in which Jesus appears in two places

18. Wesley W. Isenberg, "The Gospel of Philip," in Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 144. The *Gospel of Philip* is a Gnostic discourse found among the Nag Hammadi codices discovered in 1945–46. The Coptic version dates from the fourth century, but the original Greek probably dates from the second century CE.

19. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 320. The *Acts of John* is a mid-second-century CE apocalypse originally composed in Greek; its fullest text is in Ethiopic.

20. Ibid., 414–15.

21. James Brashler, Roger A. Bullard, and Frederick Wisse, "The Apocalypse of Peter," in Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 377. The *Apocalypse of Peter* has been dated to the third century.

simultaneously. While the crowd looks on Jesus as he is being crucified, he is actually on a mountain with his disciple John disclosing to him things he needs to learn. Even more amazing is the narrative in the *Acts of Peter*. A bright light appears, enters the eyes of blind widows and restores their sight. Peter asks the widows what they saw. Some said they saw "an old man," whose appearance cannot be described. Others said that saw "a young man." Still others said they saw "a boy tenderly touching our eyes," which resulted in the restoration of their sight. In Pseudo-Cyprian's Coptic homily on Holy Week Jesus is described in very flattering terms, even when presented to Pontius Pilate (§114).[22]

Seeing Jesus in different forms is characteristic of the *Revelation of the Magi*, which will be considered shortly. And finally, the polymorphism in the *Apocalypse of Peter* is quite intriguing. The crucified Jesus seems to have taken two forms, one "laughing on the tree" and another "whose feet and hands they are striking." The laughing figure is the "living Jesus," but the one whose hands and feet are being pierced by nails is "his fleshly part." What we have here seems to be a variation of the concept credited to Basilides, who argued that it was not Jesus who was crucified but Simon of Cyrene. While Simon was crucified Jesus stood in the crowd laughing. It is also similar to what is depicted in the *Gospel of Judas*, where the living Jesus sheds the "man who clothes me" and enters the luminous cloud. The abandoned mortal is seized and presumably crucified.[23]

Evidently drawing upon, combining, and embellishing these and similar traditions the *Revelation of the Magi*, an intriguing infancy text that probably dates to the beginning of the third century,[24] offers a number of descriptions of the many-formed Christ. The star appears to the magi in the Cave of Treasures, in the eastern land of Shir, but when they compare

22. For text and discussion, see van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem*, 56–57.

23. Polymorphism was especially valued in Gnostic interpretations of Jesus, as Foster remarks: "The property of polymorphy was particularly attractive in gnostic theology since it allowed for reflection on a divine being able to defy the limitations of the transitory and material world." See Foster, "Polymorphic Christology," 83.

24. Brent Landau, *Revelation of the Magi: The Lost Tale of the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 16–26. The *Revelation of the Magi* is found in an eighth-century Syriac manuscript called the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, named after the Zuqnin monastery in southeastern Turkey where it resided for a millennium or more. (In the eighteenth century G. S. Assemani acquired it on behalf of the Vatican.) Landau argues persuasively for an early third-century date (perhaps even late second century). In my view the text's advanced polymorphic Christology fits best in the third century. The theological sophistication suggests that the *Revelation of the Magi* was composed in an urban setting. A number of cities have

their experiences they discover that no two of them saw the same thing. "I saw a light in which there were many images," says one. "I saw an infant who had unspeakable forms," says another. "I saw a youth," says a third. "I saw a human being who was humble, unsightly in appearance, and poor." "I saw a cross and a person of light who hung upon it." "I saw that he went down to Sheol." "I saw that he ascended in glory," etc. (14:3–8). When the magi return home the people of Shir eat some of their food. They too see visions of the many-formed Christ: "I saw a great light"; "I saw God bearing himself in the world"; "I saw a human being whose appearance is more unsightly than a man"; "I saw something like a lamb"; and "I saw a pillar of light" (28:1–3).

Of especial interest is the observation that Jesus is both the star that guides the magi and, of course, the child whom the magi visit. As in the *Acts of John* and perhaps also in the *Apocalypse of Peter* Jesus is in two places simultaneously. But the *Revelation of the Magi* goes well beyond these examples. The Jesus of this apocryphal writing not only can appear in many places, he has manifested himself in various forms throughout history. Jesus (who is never explicitly identified as such) is more than the fulfilment of the prophecies of a specific people (Israel), limited to a specific region, he has in fact fulfilled "everything that was spoken about me in the entire world and in every land" (13:10). He must visit every land, throughout time, "because he has worshipers in every land" (17:5).

The ecumenism of the *Revelation of the Magi* is quite remarkable for its period of time. The author apparently believes that religious experience throughout the world in one way or another testifies to Christ. This positive view of other religious traditions "is highly unusual among early Christian writings."[25]

d. *Jesus and his Doppelgänger*

Jesus as Doppelgänger in the *Acts of John* is in some ways similar to the story of Jesus simultaneously in two places considered above (*Acts of John* 97, perhaps also *Apocalypse of Peter* 81), but it has distinctive features of interest:

> Again when all of us disciples were once sleeping in a house at Gennesaret, after wrapping myself up I watched what he did, and first I heard him say, "John, go to sleep." And thereupon I feigned to be asleep; and I saw another

been suggested as places of composition. These include Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, or Constantinople. More likely is Syria, perhaps Antioch or Edessa. The translations are Landau's.

25. Landau, *Revelation on the Magi*, 33.

> like him whom I also heard saying to my Lord, "Jesus, those whom you have chosen still do not believe in you." And my Lord said to him, "You are right, for they are men." (*Acts John* 92)[26]

John pretends to sleep and then notices another being like Jesus speaking to Jesus, saying, "Jesus, those whom you have chosen still do not believe in you." Who this second figure is supposed to be is not clear. Could he be God the Father?

The Doppelgänger concept is a variant of the idea that Jesus can appear in two or more places simultaneously. In *Acts of John* 92 the idea may be to show that the Jesus who came to earth is the mirror image of the One who sent him.

e. *Jesus as a Levitating Apparition*

The *Acts of John* contributes yet one more option in our array of polymorphic Christology:

> Another glory I will tell you, brethren. Sometimes when I meant to touch him, I met a material and solid body; and at other times again when I felt him, the substance was immaterial and bodiless and as if it were not existing at all… And often when I was walking with him I wished to see whether the print of his foot appeared upon the earth—for I saw him raising himself from the earth—but I never saw it. (*Acts John* 93)[27]

We are told that Jesus appears sometimes as "material and solid body" and at other times as "immaterial and bodiless." John even wondered if Jesus left behind footprints, for Jesus seemed to levitate ("raising himself from the earth"). As such we seem to have a form of Docetism, popular in Valentinian circles.

Closely related to these descriptions we find in Pseudo-Cyprian's Coptic homily a remarkable scene. Jesus explains to Pontius Pilate that he could have escaped arrest and crucifixion, had he wished, for he can become invisible: "Pilate, then, looked at Jesus and, behold, he became incorporeal; he did not see him for a long time. After that Jesus came to him again" (§137).[28] This is not the risen Jesus that is being described but the pre-Easter Jesus who has been brought before the Roman governor.

26. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 318.
27. Ibid.
28. Translation from van den Broek, *Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem*, 53.

f. *Jesus and the Cross*

Today the cross is as much decorative motif as it is a religious symbol. Those with no Christian commitments will even adorn themselves with cross apparel. The cross is seen everywhere. Interestingly enough, the cross-as-a-symbol was even more pervasive for the early Christian movement. From the earliest times it represented the defeat of death and the conquest of sin. The cross was also a symbol of hope in the face of death. I have personally examined the famous "anchor crosses" etched in the stone walls of the Bell Caverns at Beit Guvrin, Israel. The early Christian movement used this system of 40–50 caves linked via an underground network of passageways in their attempts to escape Vespasian's persecution. Unable to escape, the early Christians inscribed "anchor crosses" as a last statement of afterlife hope in the face of noble death.[29]

The cross-as-a-symbol represented the crucified Lord who was vindicated by God in the resurrection. The cross became the theological symbol of salvation itself in early Christian piety. For this reason, the cross took on many of the characteristics of the "vindicated Lord" himself. In the second century, the cross is described as raising with Christ, ascending into heaven, overcoming Sheol or hell and coming with Jesus at the Parousia.

In the Coptic Church there is a tradition of the cross being buried with Jesus after his death; hence we should not be too surprised to see it coming out of the tomb in Akhmîm fragment's narrative. Ethiopic traditions are, after all, well rooted in the south-eastern Empire, the general vicinity of the Akhmîm codex and, in the north-east, the *Gospel of Peter* known to Serapion, bishop of Syrian Antioch.

The tradition of a close identification of the cross with the person of Jesus probably had its origins in his own teaching: "If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24 and parallels). In the second century this concept was illustrated in literalistic fashion, as seen in the Akhmîm gospel fragment and a number of other texts:

29. For discussion of the antiquity of the cross symbol, including its appearance in the forms of compendia in the earliest extant Greek New Testament manuscripts, see Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts*, 135–54. On cross imagery, see John G. Cook, "Envisioning Crucifixion: Light from Several Inscriptions and the Palatine Graffito," *NovT* 50 (2008): 262–85; idem, "A Note on *SEG* 53,633: Crucifixion in Imperial Thessalonica," *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 387–90.

καὶ ἐξηγουμένων αὐτῶν ἃ εἶδον πάλιν ὅρωσιν ἐξελθόντος ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου τρεῖς ἄνδρες καὶ τοὺς δύο τὸν ἕνα ὑπορθοῦντας καὶ σταυρὸν ἀκολουθοῦντα αὐτοῖς. καὶ τῶν μὲν δύο τὴν κεφαλὴν χωροῦσαν μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τοῦ δὲ χειραγωγουμένου ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ὑπερβαίνουσαν τοὺς οὐρανούς. καὶ φωνῆ[ς] ἤκουον ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λεγούσης· ἐκήρυξας τοῖς κοιμωμένοις; καὶ ὑπακοὴ ἠκούετο ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ [ὅ] τι ναί.

While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw coming out from the tomb three men, and the two were supporting the one, and a cross following them.[30] And the head of the two reached as far as heaven, but that of the one being led by them surpassed the heavens. And they were hearing a voice from the heavens saying, "Have you preached to those who sleep?" And a response was heard from the cross, "Yes.") (Akhmîm fragment 10:39–42

…so will I come upon the clouds of heaven with a great host in my majesty; with my cross going before my face will I come in my majesty with all my saints, my angels. And my Father shall set a crown upon my head, that I may judge the living and the dead and recompense every man according to his works.[31] (*Apoc. Pet.* 16–19)[32]

"Truly I say to you, I will come as the sun which bursts forth; thus will I, shining seven times brighter than it in glory, while I am carried on the wings of the clouds in splendour with my cross going on before me, come to the earth to judge the living and the dead." (*Ep. Apos.* 16)[33]

30. In a comment posted online Mark Goodacre remarks that the "idea of a walking, talking cross is almost unbelievably absurd." Because the Greek text of the Akhmîm fragment is "unreliable and riddled with errors," he wonders if the text originally read σταυρωθέντα, instead of σταυρόν. If so, this would mean that it was not the cross (σταυρόν) that exited the tomb but the "crucified one" (σταυρωθέντα), that is, Jesus. Presumably a further emendation would be required a little later in the passage, where the cross answers the heavenly inquiry. In any case, Goodacre's proposal is theoretically possible, but it is hardly necessary. For it reflects a lack of acquaintance with the thought-world of late antiquity, in which polymorphism flourished. In this world of thought Jesus can be taller than a tower, take many forms, be in more than one place simultaneously. It is a world in which a cross not only can walk and talk but also fly and perform other functions. With all due respect I wonder if Goodacre is reading an old text through the lens of modern rationalism, much as did the rationalists of the nineteenth-century Old Quest scholars.

31. The *Apocalypse of Peter* is a mid-second century CE text written as a letter from the disciples to the catholic church featuring a detailed resurrection appearance.

32. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 600.

33. Ibid, 566.

> ὡς ὄντες λίθοι ναοῦ προητοιμασμένοι εἰς οἰκοδομὴν θεοῦ πατρός, ἀναφερόμενοι εἰς τὰ ὕψη διὰ τῆς μηχανῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν σταυρός, σχοινίῳ χρῶμενοι τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ· ἡ δὲ πίστις ὑμῶν ἀναγωγεὺς ὑμῶν, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη ὁδὸς ἡ ἀναφέρουσα εἰς θεόν.
>
> You consider yourselves stones of the Father's temple, prepared for the edifice of God the Father, to be taken aloft by the hoisting engine of Jesus Christ, that is, the Cross, while the Holy Spirit serves you as a rope; your faith is your spiritual windlass and your love the road which leads up to God.) (Ignatius, *Eph.* 9:1

> And when he had come to the cross he began to say, "O name of the cross, hidden mystery; O unspeakable mercy, which is expressed in the name of the cross…I will make known what you are. I will not conceal the mystery of the cross once closed and hidden to my soul…" (*Acts Pet.* 37)[34]

> Now when Jesus entered, and the ensigns were holding the standards, the images on the standards bowed down and worshipped Jesus. And when the Jews saw the behaviour of the standards, how they bowed down and worshipped Jesus. (*Acts Pil.* 5)[35]

These traditions are distinctive in depicting the cross accompanying Jesus, usually in his triumphal return. His cross goes before him, it hoists his followers to heaven, and when it (implying the cross) is in the presence of pagan images and standards, they bow before him (as in *Acts of Pilate* 1:5–6). The traditions in the *Apocalypse of Peter* ("come upon the clouds…that I may judge the living and the dead") and the *Epistola Apostolorum* ("I am carried on the wings of the clouds") are reminiscent of Jesus' response to the high priest: "…you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). The declaration that Jesus will come "as the sun…shining" and "in splendour" may also allude to Dan 12:3: "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." Brilliant light, of course, is reminiscent of the appearance of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus (Paul) on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13) and of the description of the glorified Jesus in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:9–20).[36]

In a recent study Jason Combs shows how the walking, talking cross in all probability paralleled in Greco-Roman traditions, as in

34. Ibid, 424.

35. Ibid, 171. The *Acts of Pilate* was composed in the second century CE. The work claims to have been written in Hebrew by Nicodemus. Eventually it was incorporated into the *Gospel of Nicodemus.* It is extant in Greek.

36. These passages and others are treated in Foster, "Polymorphic Christology."

Athena recognized by her aegis or Asclepius recognized by the serpents that accompany him.[37] Combs suggests that the risen Christ and the cross are in some sense linked. The "animated cross" is part of the polymorphic Christology whereby Jesus is identified. The story in the *GPet* demonstrates that Jesus "has the same divine polymorphic ability as Greco-Roman gods."[38]

Polymorphic expressions of Jesus in both pre- and post-resurrection narratives are not uncommon in early Christian literature of the second and third centuries.[39] The polymorphic Christology in the narrative of the Akhmîm gospel fragment is reflective of the wider spectrum of polymorphic Christology attested in second century Christian texts. I have shown in this section that the fragment's polymorphism, which presents a gigantic Jesus accompanied by a walking-talking cross, is reflective of traditions in late antiquity and in the second century in particular. One of the key concerns of the Akhmîm gospel fragment is that of enhancing or providing additional miraculous elements in the passion and resurrection narratives for apologetic purposes, in order to bolster faith and at the same time to answer scepticism and polemic.[40] The polymorphic Christology of the gospel fragment is yet another strand of evidence that the excerpted and collated gospel fragment found in the Akhmîm codex could well be the *GPet* spoken of by Bishop Serapion in the second century. The materials that have so far been discussed lend support to the identification of the fifth-century Akhmîm gospel fragment with the second-century *Gospel of Peter*. Further considerations that may lend additional to this identification will be treated in the brief sections that follow.

2. *Pilate in the Akhmîm Gospel Fragment*

The apologetic interests in the portrait of Pilate in the Akhmîm gospel fragment are quite evident. They go well beyond the apologetic tendencies found in the canonical gospels.[41] The Akhmîm gospel fragment's forgiving

37. Jason Robert Combs, "A Walking, Talking Cross: The Polymorphic Christology of the Gospel of Peter," *Early Christianity* 5 (2014): 198–219. See 207–15 for examples of how the gods were identified.

38. Ibid., 218.

39. Foster, *The Gospel of Peter*, 419–20; idem, "Polymorphic Christology," 67.

40. Foster, "Passion Traditions in the *Gospel of Peter*," 47–68.

41. The image of Pilate in the New Testament gospels is hotly debated. Some contend that the picture of Pilate is seriously distorted. Others, however, while acknowledging the presence of apologetic in the gospels, claim that the principal elements are true to history. In support of the essential accuracy of the portraits of Pilate in the New Testament gospels, see Brian McGing, "Pontius Pilate and the

and excusing portrayal of Pilate, governor of Samaria and Judea at the time of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, is yet another tradition that is right at home in the second-century apologetic of Christian writers.

In 1:1 Pilate washes his hands, implying that he finds no guilt in Jesus. In stark contrast Herod and the Jews refuse to wash their hands. In 11:46 Pilate, after hearing that Jesus has been raised from the dead, declares that he is "clean from the blood of the Son of God." He can say this, for it was Herod the tetrarch who ordered the death of Jesus (1:2). In contrast to this exculpatory portrait of the governor, the Jewish people are vilified. They abuse Jesus (3:6–9), express fear when darkness covered the land (5:15–18), and are said to have "completed fully their sins" (5:17) in abusing and crucifying Jesus. The Jews even openly acknowledge their sin: "Then the Jews and the elders and the priests, knowing what evil they had done to themselves, began to lament and to say, 'Woe for our sins; judgment has drawn near, even the end of Jerusalem'" (7:25; see also 8:28, where the Jewish people, murmuring and beating their breasts, fearfully ask themselves: "If at his death these great signs have happened, behold how righteous he must have been!"). The Jewish leaders fear that if Jesus is raised from the dead the people will harm them. Accordingly, they ask Pilate for a guard, lest the body of Jesus go missing and people assume he has been raised (8:29–30). When they see the resurrection take place they hurry to Pilate, "agonizing greatly and saying, 'Truly he was Son of God'" (11:45). The Jews begged Pilate to order the centurion not to tell the public what had happened, reasoning quite cynically: "For it is better to make ourselves guilty of a great sin before God, and not fall into the hands of the people of the Jews and be stoned" (11:48). It is hard to imagine how the Jewish people, especially the leaders, could have been more incriminated. In contrast to the cynicism and culpability of the Jews stands Pilate. Although the governor is not portrayed in any positive sense, his lack of guilt is underscored.

We find a number of parallels to this portrait in the *Acts of Pilate*, a work that originated in the late second century and was expanded and embellished over the next two or three centuries in a variety of languages and recensions. What is called Greek Recension A has the strongest claim to antiquity (most of the non-Greek versions date to the fourth and fifth centuries). Although it probably is not the *Acts of Pilate* referenced by Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 35, 48: "the Acts of Pontius Pilate"), Greek

Sources," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 416–38. For a fulsome study of the Roman governor, see Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (SNTSMS 100; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). It is of interest that Bond finds "no evidence of a linear progress throughout the gospels in which Pilate becomes progressively friendlier towards Christianity" (p. 206).

Recension A may well share some of its content and themes. In any event, it will be to Greek Recension A that reference will be made.

In the *Acts of Pilate* the Roman governor's advocacy for Jesus is greatly embellished (1:1, 2, 5; 2:1, 5; 4:4; 5:2; 9:4; 11:2), while the Jewish disregard for truth and injustice is exaggerated. For example, the Jews say to Pilate, "We wish him to be crucified." Pilate replies, "He does not deserve to be crucified" (4:4). The Roman guards charged with guarding Jesus' tomb question Jewish unbelief in the resurrection of Jesus: "You saw so many signs in that man and you did not believe; and how can you believe us? You rightly swore, 'As the Lord lives,' for he *does* live" (13:2). The narrative continues: "And when the Jews heard these words, they feared greatly and said, 'Take heed lest this report be heard and all turn to Jesus'" (13:3).[42] Pilate is angry that he has been almost tricked and pressured into crucifying the Son of God. Now he worries about his own eternal fate and the danger of being judged (9:2, 4; 11:2). We may compare the parallel passages in Matt 27:24, Akhmîm gospel fragment 11:46, and *Acts of Pilate* 4:1:

Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Πιλᾶτος ὅτι οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον θόρυβος γίνεται, λαβὼν ὕδωρ ἀπενίψατο τὰς χεῖρας ἀπέναντι τοῦ ὄχλου λέγων· ἀθῷός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου· ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." (Matt 27:24)	ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πειλᾶτος ἔφη· ἐγὼ καθαρεύω τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῖν δὲ τοῦτο ἔδοξεν. Answering, Pilate said, "I am clean from the blood of the son of God, and this is recognized by us." (Akhmîm fragment 11:46)	λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Πιλᾶτος· ἀθῷός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ δικαίου τούτου· ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε. λέγουσιν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν. Pilate says to them: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See you to it." The Jews say: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." (*Acts Pil.* 4:1)

42. The Jewish fear that all will turn to Jesus is also expressed in the Latin apologist Tertullian, who claims that Pilate himself became a Christian: "All these things Pilate did to Christ; and now in fact a Christian in his own convictions, he sent word of Him to the reigning Caesar, who was at the time Tiberius. Yes, and the Caesars too would have believed on Christ, if either the Caesars had not been necessary for the world, or if Christians could have been Caesars" (*Apol.* 21 [*ANF* 3:35]). The portrait of Pilate in the Akhmîm gospel fragment is right at home with second-century Christian apologetic expressed in the *Acts of Pilate* and Tertullian.

In the Akhmîm gospel fragment the centurion is given the name Petronius and he along with his soldiers announces to Pilate, "Truly this was God's Son" (11:45). In the *Acts of Pilate* the incipit is first person and overtly confessional: "Ananias, an officer of the Praetorian Guard…came to know our Lord Jesus Christ." Standing before the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea chides his fellow council members: "And you have not done well with the righteous one, for you have not repented of having crucified him, but you even pierced him with a spear" (*Acts Pil.* 12:1). The charge that the Jews have refused to repent is reminiscent of Justin's complaint levelled against Trypho (*Dial.* 108).

There are obvious apologetic parallels between the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the *Acts of Pilate*. Like the gospel fragment, the *Acts of Pilate* presents multiple accounts of either hostile or indifferent witnesses of Jesus' resurrection, "And Pilate sent for the Jews and said to them, 'Did you see what happened?'" (*Acts Pil.* 11:2). As in the Akhmîm fragment, so also in the *Acts of Pilate* miraculous events unfold at the tomb of Jesus while the soldiers were looking on:

> And we saw an angel descend from heaven, and he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the cave, and sat upon it, and he shone like snow and like lightning. (*Acts Pil.* 13:1)

> And they saw the heavens were being opened, and two men descended from there, having much brightness, and they drew near to the tomb. (Akhmîm fragment 9:36)

In the *Acts of Pilate* the Roman soldiers charged with guarding Jesus' tomb marvel at the unbelieving Jewish response to the resurrection: "'You saw so many signs in that man and you did not believe; and how can you believe us? You rightly swore, "As the Lord lives," for he *does* live.' And when the Jews heard these words, they feared greatly and said, 'Take heed lest this report be heard and all turn to Jesus'" (*Acts Pil*. 13:2–3).

As does the Akhmîm gospel fragment, the *Acts of Pilate* presents Pilate as a reasonable judge engaging and disputing with an unyielding and unruly mob determined to do away with Jesus. Moreover, as in the gospel fragment, in the *Acts of Pilate* the governor's disposition towards Jesus is reported as one of gentleness and respect. Moreover, his own personal appraisal of the accused is evident and unequivocal: Jesus is a "righteous" man. The tendency in Christian literature to exonerate Pilate continues on into the third and fourth centuries and beyond.[43]

43. A rich tradition of fictional writings alleging to represent official Roman records, Pilate's report to Tiberius or the Roman Senate, and the like emerged in

3. *The Akhmîm Gospel Fragment and the Greek Novel*

Some twenty years ago Glen Bowersock suggested that the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus influenced Greco-Roman literature. He drew our attention to three Greek novels that were produced from the late first to the late second centuries CE. All three feature the device of *Scheintod*, "apparent death," in which a principal character apparently dies, is buried, and then is later discovered alive. The parallels with the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and the appearance of these novels one to three generations after the Christian message had become known in Rome and especially in the Greek-speaking eastern empire led Bowersock to suspect that the Christian story provided the inspiration for the novels, at least for the *Scheintod* plot device.[44] He notes: "The question we must now ask is whether from a historical point of view we would be justified in explaining the extraordinary growth in fictional writing, and its characteristic and concomitant fascination with resurrection, as some kind of reflection of the remarkable stories that were coming out of Palestine precisely in the middle of the first century A.D."[45]

Bowersock's remarkable hypothesis has been welcomed by a number of New Testament scholars who have called for further comparison of the Gospels and Acts with Greco-Roman novels.[46] Several second-century Christian works, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the *Acts of Andrew*,

the Byzantine and Medieval periods. Much of this material has been augmented and re-issued in later times, even as recently as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

44. Glen W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Sather Classical Lectures 58; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), esp. Chapter 5: "Resurrection," 99–119.

45. Ibid., 119.

46. See Ronald F. Hock (ed.), *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative* (SBL Symposium 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); J. A. Brant, C. W. Hedrick, and C. Shea (eds.), *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (Symposium 32; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). For an appreciative engagement with Bowersock in the latter book, see the essay by Andy M. Reimer, "A Biography of a Motif: The Empty Tomb in the Gospels, the Greek Novels, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*," pp. 297–316. Reimer finds Bowersock's hypothesis persuasive. I should note that in English-language New Testament scholarship Hock was one of the first to see the relevance of Greek novels for understanding Christian narrative. See Ronald F. Hock, "The Greek Novel," in David E. Aune (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 127–46. In this collection of studies one should also consult Loveday Alexander, "St. Paul and the Greek Novel," 235–56.

and the *Acts of John*, have been studied as examples of novels, seen in a sense as Christian counterparts to the pagan novels and romances of the time.[47] This line of inquiry may provide us with further assistance in determining the date of composition of the Akhmîm gospel fragment. I begin with a brief review of the *Scheintod* device in the novels of Chariton of Aphrodisias, Xenophon of Ephesus, and Achilles Tatius, the three novels discussed by Bowersock.[48]

Of the three novelists Chariton of Aphrodisias is the earliest. When he lived is disputed. Some have claimed that he wrote his romantic novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in the first century BCE, but recent historians and classicists have argued that the novel was written no earlier than the mid-first CE and no later than the mid-second century, as recent papyri finds indicate.[49] In a fit of rage Chaereas kicks his pregnant wife. She apparently dies and is then buried. Stricken with grief Chaereas decides to visit Callirhoe's grave. "When he reached the tomb, he found that the stones had been moved and the entrance was open. He was astonished

47. See Melissa Aubin, "Reversing Romance: The *Acts of Thecla* and the Ancient Novel," in Hock (ed.), *Ancient Fiction*, 257–72. Aubin believes that the apocryphal books of Acts of the second and third centuries made use of but also transformed features of the Greek romance. See also Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew* (Early Christian Apocrypha 1; Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2005).

48. For a critical study of our three Greek novelists, see Tomas Hägg, *Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances: Studies of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus and Achilles Tatius* (Stockholm: P. Aström, 1971).

49. Papyrus fragments of Chariton's novel (P.Fayum 1, from Karanis) have been dated to the second half of the second century. The first-century BCE date has been argued in Antonios D. Papanikolaou, *Chariton-Studien: Untersuchungen zur Sprache und Chronologie der griechischen romane* (Hypomnemata 37; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), esp. 153–59. Papanikolaou argues for an early date on the basis of the novel's non-Atticizing style. But these findings have been challenged in Bryan P. Reardon, "Introduction to *Chaereas and Callirhoe*," in B. P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), here 17; idem, "A. Chariton," in G. Schmelling (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 309–35, esp. 312–25; Consuelo Ruiz-Montero, "Aspects of the Vocabulary of Chariton of Aphrodisias," *Classical Quarterly* 41 (1991): 484–89; and Edmund P. Cueva, "Plutarch's Ariadne in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*," *American Journal of Philology* 117 (1996): 473–84. Reardon argues for a mid-first-century date, while Ruiz-Montero argues for a late-first-century date. Cueva thinks Chariton drew inspiration from Plutarch, which if correct dates Chariton to some time after 120 CE. See also Tomas Hägg, "*Callirhoe* and *Parthenope*: The Beginnings of the Historical Novel," *Classical Antiquity* 6 (1987): 184–204; repr. in Simon Swain (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 137–60.

at the sight and overcome by fearful perplexity at what had happened" (Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3.3.1–2).[50] The similarities with the account in the Gospel of Mark are apparent: "[T]hey went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?' And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back…(and) they were afraid" (Mark 16:2–8).

Xenophon of Ephesus (late second century CE) wrote a number of novels, of which only the five-book *Ephesian Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes* is extant. Ship-wreck, pirates, robbers, apparent death, and seemingly miraculous survival characterize this cumbersome novel.[51] At one point (book 4) protagonist Habrocomes is placed on a cross overlooking the Nile and left to die. The wind blows the cross and Habrocomes into the river, where he is carried downstream, only to be torched by a vengeful governor. He is saved from the fire when the waves of the Nile douse the flames. The governor believes it is a miracle and alters his opinion of the protagonist.[52]

Achilles Tatius of Alexandria also wrote in the second century. His best known and only surviving work is *Leucippe and Clitophon*.[53] This novelist thrills his readers with no fewer than three "false deaths," wherein Leucippe apparently dies and then returns to life! Although eviscerated, Leucippe emerges from her coffin (3.17). Later, Leucippe is seemingly decapitated, yet once again she is restored to life (5.19: "Will Leucippe live again?"). And finally, yet another report of Leucippe's untimely demise is found to be false. Clitophon is reminded that though reported dead, Leucippe has a way of returning to life (7.6). As readers have come to expect, the lovers are happily reunited. Centuries later the popular novel is alluded to in an epigram attributed to the famous Photius (ninth century):

50. Trans. based on Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 116.

51. According to Graham Anderson, Xenophon's novel is "a specimen of penny dreadful literature in antiquity." See Graham Anderson, "Xenophon of Ephesus: An Ephesian Tale," in Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 125–28, here 125. Other critics take a more charitable view.

52. For a critical introduction, see ibid., 125–28; Bernhard Kytzler, "B. Xenophon of Ephesus," in Schmeling (ed.), *Novel in the Ancient World*, 336–59, esp. 346–48; and Chris Shea, "Setting the Stage for Romances: Xenophon of Ephesus and the Ecphrasis," in Hock (ed.), *Ancient Fiction*, 61–76.

53. Sometimes the title is given more fully as *The Story (or Adventure) of Leucippe and Clitophon*. For critical introduction, see John J. Winkler, "Achilles Tatius: Leucippe and Clitophon," in Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 170–75. For a recent translation, see Tim Whitmarsh, *Leucippe and Clitophon*: *Achilles Tatius* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

> The acid taste of love combined with chastity
> Is pictured in the tale of Clitophon.
> Chaster still the all-astounding heroine:
> Leucippe beaten, shaved, and much abused.
> But, most astounding!—she endured three executions.[54]

The reference to Leucippe in an epigram of such late date testifies to the lasting popularity of this romantic novel. Even as paganism faded away and the Roman and Byzantine Empires became Christianized, the old novels and romances continued to circulate and exert influence upon popular and literary culture—Christian or pagan.[55]

That the Greek novels described above received inspiration at least in part from the Christian story of the death, burial, and miraculous resurrection of Jesus seems quite probable, not only because of the parallels already considered, but also because in *Leucippe and Clitophon* we have an allusion to the Words of Institution, in which Jesus compares wine with his blood. In Achilles Tatius' novel the story is told of Dionysus, the god of wine, benefiting a pious shepherd, by transforming a stream of water into wine. The god asserts: "This is the water of early autumn, this is the blood of the grape." Dionysus then crushes a cluster of grapes and says: "This is the water, and this is the fountain" (*Leucippe and Clitophon* 2.2). Bowersock rightly comments that the allusions to the Words of Institution, "This is my blood" (Matt 26:28), and to the miracle of changing water into wine (John 2:1–11) are unmistakable.[56]

Bowersock is not surprised that the Christian story had become well known by the middle of the first century. The Christian movement was known in Rome in the 40s, for the Jewish disturbance and expulsion from Rome in this decade seem to have been linked to the Jesus movement (at least according to Suetonius' understanding; see *Claudius* 25.4). Paul's letter to the Corinthians, in which the Words of Institution are recorded (1 Cor 11:20–26), circulated in a major Greek city in the 50s. In 64 Nero blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed about half of the city of Rome (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44). Such an exculpatory move could succeed

54. *Palatine Anthology* 9.203. The translation comes from Winkler, "Achilles Tatius," 174 n. 10. The epigram is quoted and discussed in Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 106. That Photius actually uttered the epigram is uncertain.

55. On this point, see Glen W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), Chapter 5: "Greek Literature in Egypt," 55–69.

56. See Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 125–26. Winkler believes the words of Dionysius are a deliberate parody of Jesus' words. See Winkler, "Achilles Tatius," 192 n. 25.

only if the Christians were a recognized group with distinctive teachings. The Gospel of Mark was probably known in Rome in the 60s (70s at latest).[57] A few years later the Gospel of Matthew began to circulate in western Syria, probably in Antioch, an influential city of commerce. Writing in the 60s the well-known satirist Petronius parodies the Words of Institution by describing a scene in which a dying man prepares his final testament, requiring his surviving family and friends to consume his flesh (*Satyricon* 141.2–4).[58] Indeed, in some pagan circles, in crude allusions to the Eucharist, Christians were actually accused of cannibalism (a charge that Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia-Pontus, seems to have investigated; see *Epistles* 10.96).[59]

In light of these factors Bowersock is probably correct in thinking that the Christian story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection was well known in the Roman Empire, especially among Greek speakers. Accordingly, Bowersock's hypothesis that the Christian story influenced Greek writers of romance, especially those with a taste for *Scheintod*, remains quite plausible. Whether playful, ironic, or intended as parody, the Greek novelists toyed with and drew inspiration from the story that lay at the heart of the Christian message.

In view of these literary interests and developments in the second century, Bowersock plausibly suggests that Celsus' objections to the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus make good sense. Celsus is reacting not simply to the original proclamation, the way the story was told in the middle of the first century, but to the impact that

57. I am assuming "moderate" dates for the Synoptic Gospels. Twenty years ago John Wenham suggested the 40s and 50s. See J. W. Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 223–44. James Crossley recently argues that Mark was composed in the late 30s, or early 40s at the latest. See J. G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* (JSNTSup 266; London: T&T Clark International, 2004). Recent major commentaries have dated all three of the Synoptic Gospels to the 60s (e.g., Collins, France, Hagner, Marcus, Nolland). Other (older) critical commentaries, of course, have suggested later dates, such as the 70s and 80s.

58. Bowersock rightly asks, "How did Petronius come to conceive of a *testamentum* like this?" See *Fiction as History*, 136. The most plausible answer is that Petronius has made a parody of Jesus' words, "This is my blood of the testament" (Matt 26:28).

59. In the course of his interrogations of Christians Pliny the Younger discovers that they do partake of a special meal, but it consists only of "food of an ordinary, harmless kind" (10.96.7). Behind the comment that the Christian meal is harmless likely lies the slander that Christians ate human flesh, including infants that had been cast out.

the story was having in his time, in the middle of the second century. It is against this backdrop that his critical questioning makes good sense: "We must examine this question, whether anyone who really died ever rose again with the same body" (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.55).[60] In their own playful ways this is the very question that underlies the interest in *Scheintod* that we see in the Greek romances.

It seems then that the accounts of the first-century Christian gospels gave rise to new ideas exploited and exaggerated in late-first and second-century Greek novels, which in turn influenced, perhaps even led to the creation of second-century Christian novels, such as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, *Acts of John*, and other writings, writings customarily regarded by scholars as "apocryphal," but which are probably better regarded as Christian novels.

I think we should regard the Akhmîm gospel fragment, which perhaps should be identified with the *GPet*, as one more second-century Christian writing, or novel, which reflects a number of the features we see in the secular romances and in the just-mentioned fictional books of *Acts*.[61] Like the Greek romances that have been reviewed, the Akhmîm gospel fragment tells an exciting tale of the execution and burial of Jesus, complete with elaborate precautions to see to it that no resurrection story results. But the resurrection does happen, in full view of a crowd of hostile eyewitnesses. The stone that covered the entrance to the tomb is—by itself—moved aside. Two men who descended from heaven enter the tomb and lead Jesus out of the tomb. The heads of all three reach up to the very heavens themselves. A voice from heaven is heard and the cross on which Jesus had been crucified answers back. The Jewish and Roman witnesses are astounded and report all to the governor, who now regrets what he allowed to happen and declares that he is innocent, declaring that the death of Jesus was "all your doing!" (11.46). The Jewish leaders surround the governor and beg him to keep from the public what has happened, after all, "it is better to make ourselves guilty of a great sin before God, and not fall into the hands of the people of the Jews and be stoned" (11.48). As does the governor in Xenophon's novel, so the governor in the gospel fragment changes his mind, regretting what he has done.

60. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 118. I follow Bowersock's translation.

61. It is gratifying to see my suggestion taken up and discussed, even if briefly, in Thomas J. Kraus, "EvPet 12,50–14,60: Leeres Grab und was dann? Kanonische Traditionen, *novelistic development* und romanhafte Züge," *Early Christianity* 5 (2013): 335–61, here 338 and n. 10.

It is probable that the retelling of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in the Akhmîm gospel fragment reflects the fascination with the question of life after death and the vivid narrative devices that were emerging in the second century. Of course, for the author of the gospel fragment, Jesus really did rise from the dead. His resurrection was no *Scheintod*. The author of the Akhmîm fragment writes from the perspective of faith, not scepticism. What he writes and the way he writes it fit very well with the popular literature that was produced by pagan and Christian writers alike in the second century.

In a sense then we come full circle. I believe we should, in the words of Glen Bowersock, "consider the possibility that the Gospel stories themselves provided the impetus for the emergence of [Greek romantic] fiction in the first place"[62] and ironically that fiction shaped the Christian literature, including the Akhmîm gospel fragment, of the second century and beyond.

4. *Other Points of Comparison*

The final items of inquiry may be treated much more briefly. Here we are concerned with the expression "Lord's day," the implications that the Akhmîm gospel fragment probably circulated under the name of Peter, and the implications of the circulation and probable origin of the Akhmîm gospel fragment in Syria,[63] the region in which the Gospel of Matthew originated and circulated.

a. *The Lord's Day*

The expression "Lord's day" in the Akhmîm fragment (at 9:35) is consistent with the use of this phrase in late first-century and second-century Christian writings. It hardly points to the middle of the first century. The author of the fragment begins his Easter narrative with the words: τῇ δὲ νυκτὶ ᾗ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ κυριακή ("now on the night in which the Lord's [day] dawned," 9:35). So far as we know, the first appearance of this designation is in the book of Revelation, a writing that began to circulate near the end of the first century. The seer narrates the setting of his vision: ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνήν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος ("I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day,

62. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 119.

63. As suggested by Vinzent and Nicklas, "Petrusevangelium," 692: "aufgrund der Parallelen zu anderen altkirchlichen Texten" ("on the basis of the parallels with other old Church texts"). Vinzent and Nicklas speak of western Syria.

and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet," Rev 1:10). The reference is to Sunday, not to Easter Sunday specifically.[64] The expression appears in the *Didache*, another text composed ca. 100. The Teacher instructs his flock: κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου συναχθέντες κλάσατε ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσατε ("On the Lord's own [day] gather together and break bread and give thanks," *Did.* 14:1). A third early occurrence is found in Ignatius, who wrote his letters sometime between 112 and 118. He exhorts the Christians of Magnesia:

> If, then, those who had lived according to ancient practices came to the newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord's day [μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες αλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες], on which our life also arose through him and his death (which some deny), the mystery through which we came to believe, and because of which we patiently endure, in order that we may be found to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher, how can we possibly live without him, whom even the prophets, who were his disciples in the Spirit, were expecting as their teacher? This is why the one for whom they rightly waited raised them from the dead when he came. (*Magn.* 9:1–2)

Note that "living according to the Lord's day" (κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες) is placed over against "keeping the Sabbath" (σαββατίζοντες). The first two texts (Rev 1:10; *Did.* 14.1) that make use of the designation "Lord's Day" do not do this. By the early second century, when Ignatius wrote, the Lord's Day of Christians had come to be understood as a rival of the Jewish Sabbath. This development stands in contrast to Paul, for example, who without prejudice toward the Sabbath of his day, exhorts the Christians of Corinth to set aside money on the first day of the week (cf. 1 Cor 16:2).[65] The same rivalry seems to be present in the Akhmîm gospel fragment, where ἡ κυριακή takes the place of εἰς μίαν σαββάτων (Matt 28:1). The use of "Lord's Day" in the Akhmîm fragment seems to represent a continuation of what we see in Ignatius, which is not surprising if the fragment preserves an excerpt of a text that originated in the middle of the second century. I might also note that the three early texts that make use of the designation originated in Syria or eastern Asia Minor, the very region in which the *GPet* probably originated.

64. Rightly so David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 52A; Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 84.

65. Paul (or one of his students) complains of legalism associated with the Sabbath and other special days in Col 2:16, but this has nothing to do with Sunday replacing the Sabbath.

b. *"I, Simon Peter"*

As has already been mentioned, the Akhmîm gospel fragment probably circulated under the name of Peter. This is quite likely because of the first-person self-references in 7:26–27 and especially in 14:59–60: "But we, the twelve disciples of the Lord, were weeping and being grieved, and each one, being grieved on account of what took place, departed to his house.[60] But I, Simon Peter [ἐγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος], and Andrew my brother, having taken our nets, went out to sea. And Levi was with us, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord…" Because we know of no other gospel that circulated under the name of Peter, we may reasonably suspect that the Akhmîm gospel fragment is an excerpt of this gospel, which near the end of the second century Serapion, bishop of Antioch, condemned.

c. *A Syrian Provenance*

Another factor that encourages linking the Akhmîm gospel fragment to the *GPet*, known to have circulated in Syria and perhaps originally composed in Syria, is the strong possibility that the Gospel of Matthew, on which the Akhmîm fragment relies so heavily, was also composed in Syria (specifically Antioch) and would have been well known and very influential in Syria. When we recall that a number of other factors also point to a Syrian provenance for the Akhmîm fragment, such as its polymorphic Christology and the use of the designation "Lord's Day," in contrast to "Sabbath," as well as a significant degree of coherence with the polemic and apologetic of eastern second-century Church Fathers, we have reasonable grounds for concluding that this fragment from Akhmîm probably is an excerpt of the *GPet*.

All of the factors that have been considered in this chapter recommend that we (1) date the text of the Akhmîm gospel fragment to the middle of the second century,[66] (2) place it in a Syrian context, and (3) identify it with the *GPet*.

66. Arguing largely on the basis of the Akhmîm fragment's relationship to the canonical gospels, Tobias Nicklas has reached the same conclusion, stating that the text is best dated in the middle of the second century. See Nicklas, "Das apokryphe *Petrusevangelium*." Nicklas also favours a Syrian provenance.

Chapter 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Modern scholarship concerned with the *GPet* began with a discovery during the excavation of a burial site at Akhmîm, Egypt, in a city that in late Greco-Roman antiquity was known as Panopolis. What was found was an old codex, dating to the fifth century (or later), which contained an excerpt of a gospel narrative, a narrative written in the first person, as though Simon Peter was himself the narrator.

Although it has been widely assumed that this Byzantine-era excerpt belongs to the second-century *GPet*, condemned by Bishop Serapion ca. 200, it needs to be emphasized that this is only an assumption. This assumption is very much in evidence in most scholarship concerned with the *GPet*. On the basis of this assumption a number of weighty theories have been propounded that have profound implications for our understanding of the formation of the New Testament gospels, the historicity of the resurrection, and perhaps even for our understanding of the historical Jesus and the events of Passion Week.[1] If the Akhmîm gospel fragment, assumed by many to be the *GPet*, is to play a role in serious scholarship, then much better grounds for viewing it as an early document must be established. The arguments thus far mounted are inadequate.

What is the problem in identifying the Akhmîm gospel fragment with the second-century *GPet*? There are three facets to this problem. First, no

1. Many, if not most, scholars assume that the Akhmîm gospel fragment is an excerpt of the second-century *GPet*. A number of scholars have argued that this gospel fragment is as old as the New Testament gospels and is independent of them. A few scholars have even argued that the New Testament gospels depended on the resurrection narrative of the Akhmîm fragment. For arguments of antiquity and independence, see Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 216–40. For arguments that the gospel fragment served as a Passion source for all four New Testament gospels, see Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke*. It needs to be emphasized that Koester does not accept some of Crossan's conclusions. Koester and Crossan are among the better-known New Testament scholars who have made major use of the Akhmîm gospel fragment.

part of the *GPet* survives in patristic sources. Therefore, no comparison between the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the *GPet* mentioned by Serapion can be made. Moreover, Serapion's link between the *GPet* and second-century Docetism has not been confirmed by analysis of the contents of the Akhmîm fragment. On the contrary, recent scholarship has concluded that there is nothing docetic in the gospel fragment. The absence of docetic elements where one should expect to find them, if the excerpt truly belonged to a docetic writing, suggests that the Akhmîm fragment, even if it circulated under the name of Peter, may in fact not be the *GPet*.

Second, even if we were to take the position that the fragment is either a part of the *GPet* or another second-century Petrine apocryphon, is it prudent to assume that the text as preserved in the Akhmîm Codex reflects the original, early text? After all, the text of the Akhmîm fragment may have been heavily redacted in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries and no longer truly reflects the distinctive features of the original text.[2]

Third, the small papyrus fragments from Oxyrhynchus (i.e., 2949 and 4009) cannot with confidence be identified as belonging to the *GPet* or the text that is extant in the Akhmîm Codex.[3] Consequently these fragments really do not help either with the date of the Akhmîm gospel fragment or with its identification. Consequently, if we are to date the Akhmîm text to the second century (whether or not we identify it with the *GPet*), we must provide evidence of another kind which points to the second century. The present study provides just this evidence.

To place the Akhmîm gospel fragment, with its unusual resurrection narrative, in its proper context it was necessary to review the origin and history of the resurrection concept, from its murky past in the ancient Near East, to its more vigorous, dogmatic, and explicit form we encounter in the aftermath of the Maccabean revolt. This review was the concern of Chapters 4 and 5, whose principal points may be briefly recapped.

The origins of afterlife beliefs in ancient Israel remain obscure. Prophetic oracles that spoke of the nation's restoration sometimes made use of metaphor—comparing the restoration of national health to that of raising up the dead—metaphor that encouraged later ideas of literal

2. Koester (*Acient Christian Gospels*, 219) rightly draws attention to this problem.

3. As recently demonstrated by Foster, "Are There Any Early Fragments." Dieter Lührmann's polemical reply has not in any significant way weakened the force of Foster's observations. See Lührmann, "Kann es wirklich keine frühe Handschrift des Petrusevangeliums gebens?" See Foster's rejoinder in "The Disputed Early Fragments." Lührmann has misunderstood and in places misrepresented aspects of Foster's study and conclusions.

resurrection of human beings. A handful of texts, such as Ezek 37:12–14, Isa 26:19, and Hos 6:2, were in fact taken to refer to literal resurrection. Of course, literal resurrection came to explicit expression in Dan 12:2, a text that no doubt encouraged resurrection interpretation of the three older texts. In any case, in the time of Jesus and the early Church the concept of resurrection was fully developed, even if not accepted by all Jews—and categorically rejected by some.

In Chapter 6 New Testament teaching regarding resurrection was surveyed. Jesus presupposed the resurrection, as seen in his reply to the sceptical Sadducees (Mark 12:18–27). Scribes and Pharisees who found much to fault in Jesus' teaching and practice nevertheless completely agreed with his belief in resurrection (Mark 12:28; Luke 10:25–28).[4] Jesus presupposed the resurrection, evidently based in part on Hos 6:2, in his predictions of suffering and personal vindication (Mark 8:31 and parallels). Elsewhere in his teaching the resurrection is assumed (Mark 9:42–50; Luke 14:14; John 5:29; 11:24). Shortly after his death on the cross the resurrection of Jesus was boldly proclaimed, both in the New Testament gospel narratives and in the preaching of his disciples (in the book of Acts and the epistles). Not only is the language of resurrection employed, the reality of it is illustrated in vivid stories, where the tomb in which the body of Jesus had been placed is described as empty[5] and where Jesus eats food and can be touched (Luke 24:36–43; John 20:17; 21:9–15). These details make it clear that the post-crucifixion Jesus witnessed by his disciples was not a phantom but was truly raised from the dead.

Scepticism with regard to the resurrection was inevitable. Literarily our earliest evidence is found in 1 Corinthians 15, where the scepticism is not so much centred on the resurrection of Jesus but on the future resurrection of those who believe in him. More will be said about this passage in a moment. Historically speaking, scepticism with regard to the

4. After Jesus' reply to the Sadducees, a scribe approaches Jesus, observing that Jesus had "answered them well" (Mark 12:28; compare Matt 22:34 "when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees"). In the exchange between Jesus and a legal authority (Luke 10:25–28) the resurrection is presupposed, even if there was disagreement over how to attain it.

5. The absence of Jesus' body is implied in Matt 28:1–8 and Mark 16:1–8 ("he is not here"), but in Luke and John it is made explicit. According to Luke 24:3 the women enter the tomb but "did not find the body." The detail is repeated in v. 23. The story in John 20 is quite dramatic, as Mary Magdalene finds the tomb empty and reports to the disciples, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him" (v. 2). Soon after Peter and John enter the tomb and find only grave clothes (vv. 5–7).

proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus probably began with the proclamation itself. This early scepticism is attested in Matthew 27–28, where we are told that the ruling priests posted a guard at the tomb of Jesus, "lest his disciples go and steal him away" (27:62–66), and that the guards, having witnessed the resurrection, were bribed to say that the disciples in fact did steal the body of Jesus (28:11–15).[6]

Hints of apologetic are also found in the early history of the post-Easter Church, where in selecting a replacement for the apostate Judas Iscariot, the Apostles seek out a man who was a "witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). As it turns out, there were at least two men who met this requirement (Acts 1:23). In the sermon preached in the aftermath of raising the lame man, Peter refers to the resurrection of Jesus, "to which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). The selection of a replacement for Judas has a theological purpose, to be sure, but an element of apologetic seems probable.

Even so, the apologetic of Matthew and Acts is rather modest. The apostles and others proclaim the resurrection and claim to be witnesses. In fact, the book of Acts leaves the impression that the works of power, witnessed during Jesus' pre-Easter ministry (Acts 2:22: "miracles and wonders and signs…just as you yourselves know") and now witnessed in the post-Easter preaching and activities of the Church (Acts 2:43; 3:10, 16; 4:16, 21–22), provide the most persuasive apologetic for the truth of the Christian message. The resurrection itself seems to play second fiddle. But in the passage of time this changes, as we see in New Testament literature and later literature.

The letters of Paul chronologically precede the writing of the New Testament Gospels. Although some scholars have suggested dates as early as the 40s or 50s for Mark or Matthew,[7] most believe the Synoptic Gospels were written and circulated in the 60s and 70s, while the fourth Gospel was penned sometime in the 90s. Paul's letters range in date from

6. The posting of a guard at the tomb of an executed criminal, to prevent the removal of the body (to place it in the family tomb or other place of honour), is fully in keeping with Jewish burial law and traditions. On Jewish burial customs, see Craig A. Evans, "The Family Buried Together Stays Together: On the Burial of the Executed in Family Tombs," in C. A. Evans (ed.), *The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in Early Communities of Faith* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 87–96. On the posting of a guard at tombs of executed criminals, see C. A. Evans, *Matthew*, 473–75, where the relevant ancient literature and archaeological discoveries are presented.

7. As, for example, in Wenham, *Redating Matthew*; Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel*.

about 50 to the mid-60s. Literarily, therefore, Paul's letters precede the Gospels and Acts. The first hint of resurrection apologetic in Paul is found in his first letter to the Christians of Corinth. Evidently some in the church questioned the future resurrection of believers, perhaps even the resurrection of Jesus. In response Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel message, which he himself had received:

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor 15:3–8)

How much of this important, early tradition Paul received is difficult to determine. The principal elements are "Christ died for our sins," "he was buried," "he was raised on the third day," and "he appeared to Cephas." The twofold appearance of "in accordance with the scriptures" may have been added by Paul. One may suspect that Paul expands the list of witnesses, "then to the twelve," etc. It is an intriguing question, but it need not be pursued here.[8] What is important to observe is the piling up of witnesses: the twelve, five hundred, James, "all the apostles," and finally Paul himself. What especially smacks of apologetic is the qualification added to the five hundred brothers (and sisters, we should assume): "most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" (v. 6). In saying this, Paul is inviting sceptics to consult, if possible, the eyewitnesses themselves.

Apologetic touches continue to appear in later Christian literature. The guard tradition in Matthew becomes a popular theme in some writings. The *Gospel of the Nazarenes*, a Jewish Gospel dating to sometime between 120 and 140 and probably dependent on Matthew, embellishes the guard tradition: "And he (Pilate) delivered to them armed men that they might sit over against the cave and guard it day and night" (variant to Matt 27:65 in what is called the "Zion Gospel" edition). The Akhmîm gospel fragment elaborates on this tradition, multiplying the number of people—both Jewish elders and Roman guards—who keep watch over

8. See the critical discussion in Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 722–34; Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 1186–97; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 540–42. Paul's omission of the female witnesses anticipates the more explicit apologetic that will emerge in the second century.

the tomb. The *Acts of Pilate*, another work from the mid-second century, elaborates on the story in its own way but clearly reflects a similar interest and approach.

However, there are several close points of coherence between the Akhmîm gospel fragment and developments in the second century that lead to the conclusion that this fragment is indeed an excerpt from a writing that originated in the second century and that the text of this fragment is probably more or less identical to the original text of this second-century writing. I highlight the most important points of coherence.

(1) *Anti-Semitism*. Anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire reached its lowest point in the immediate aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 CE). This revolt was the third and probably worst of the revolts. If the figures of Dio Cassius are anywhere near the truth, the losses on both sides were enormous. A generation after the Bar Kokhba revolt Fronto consoles Emperor Marcus Aurelius with the reminder of the "great number of (Roman) soldiers" that were killed by the Jews. Writing in the early second century, probably only a year or so before the outbreak of the North African Jewish rebellion (115–117 CE), Roman historian Tacitus refers to the Jewish people as rebellious and unsocial.

Second-century Christian writers were fully aware of this anti-Semitism. In his first *Apology*, written to Aurelius, Justin Martyr complains that the Jews "kill and punish" Christians whenever they can, "as you can well believe." Aurelius the Roman emperor "can well believe" what Justin says, given the recent violent rebellions. Justin has placed Christians alongside Romans as victims of Jewish violence. Other Christian writers, such as Eusebius, make it clear that Christians were persecuted by the leader of the Jewish revolt because they would not join him in his war against Rome.

The anti-Jewish elements in the Akhmîm gospel fragment cohere with the anti-Semitism of the second century in general and the anti-Semitism expressed in some second-century Christian literature. In the Akhmîm fragment Pilate washes his hands, but the Jews do not. It is Herod Antipas, not the Roman governor, who commands that Jesus be crucified. A Jewish mob shoves and insults Jesus, only too eager to assist in his execution. When Jesus dies, the Jews rejoice. When the resurrection of Jesus becomes known, the Jews lament and readily acknowledge their great sin. Details such as these go well beyond the apologetic touches found in the first-century New Testament gospels. The Akhmîm gospel fragment is right at home in the middle of the second century.

(2) *Pagan and Jewish polemic against the Christians*. The Akhmîm gospel fragment is well understood as a response to Pagan and Jewish polemic levelled against the Christians, their gospels, and especially their proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus. Pagans such as Celsus and Porphyry complained that the Christian gospels were contradictory and that the resurrection narratives, based on the testimony of hysterical and unreliable women, could not be believed. If Jesus was divine and if he truly had been raised from the dead, then he would have revealed himself to credible witnesses, such as Roman officials and Jewish leaders.

In older polemic Jewish critics claimed that the disciples of Jesus had illegally removed the body of Jesus and then deceitfully proclaimed his resurrection. The earliest form of this charge appears in the Gospel of Matthew and continues to be voiced in second-century synagogues, according to Justin Martyr.

To these charges the author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment responds. The resurrection of Jesus was in fact witnessed by Jewish elders, a named Roman centurion, and the centurion's soldiers. The testimony of the resurrection no longer rests on the word of frightened, hysterical women, or even on the male disciples for that matter. Because the tomb of Jesus was guarded, theft of his body was impossible. The hostile witnesses saw a glorified Jesus, assisted by two angels, exit the tomb. In the Akhmîm narrative the resurrected Jesus does just what Celsus and Porphyry said he should have done: he reveals himself to the very people who condemned him to the cross. The Akhmîm gospel narrative of the resurrection brings to completion an apologetic move that began in Matthew and reflects the nature of the polemic that had come to expression in Pagan and Jewish circles by the middle of the second century.

(3) *Polymorphic Christology*. The resurrection narrative of the Akhmîm gospel fragment exhibits more than mere apologetic; it also exhibits the development of what scholars call polymorphic Christology, that is, depictions of Jesus in various forms. The polymorphism of the Akhmîm fragment is fully consistent to the polymorphic Christology that emerged in the second century and seems deliberately to mimic aspects of pagan ideas about the polymorphic abilities of the gods.

In the Akhmîm narrative Jesus is exceedingly tall. This element is attested in the Shepherd of Hermas, 2 Esdras, the *Acts of John*, and Pseudo-Cyprian's Coptic homily on Holy Week. In other writings, mostly dating from the second century, Jesus appears variously as a child, an old man, or a young man. In some writings Jesus appears in more than one place simultaneously. In the recently published *Revelation of the*

Magi Jesus appears in many places and in many times throughout human history. In some texts Jesus is immaterial, even invisible.

The Akhmîm gospel fragment also describes the cross as accompanying Jesus and even replying to the heavenly voice. This aspect of Christology also coheres with second-century developments. In Ignatius, the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, *Acts of Peter*, and *Acts of Pilate* the cross of Jesus accompanies Jesus and performs various acts and functions.

In short, the polymorphic Christology of the Akhmîm fragment is fully in step with the polymorphism of the second century. The polymorphic Christology of the fragment enhances its apologetic, much as it does other second-century Christian literature, and at the same time appeals to some of the ideas that Greeks and Roman held with regard to their gods.

(4) *Portrait of Pilate*. In keeping with its apologetic, the author of the Akhmîm gospel fragment portrays Pontius Pilate in a relatively favourable light. Pilate finds no guilt in Jesus. Rather he declares himself "clean from the blood of the Son of God." In contrast to Pilate's innocence, the Jewish leaders and even the Jewish people in general confess their sin and acknowledge that they face divine judgment. They desire to have the tomb guarded, not because the disciples will steal the corpse of Jesus, but because the body might go missing; should this happen, the people will assume that Jesus has been raised and then they will turn on their leaders. Shifting the blame for the death of Jesus away from Pilate to the Jewish leaders is a tactic seen in second-century Christian literature. Once again, the perspective of the Akhmîm gospel fragment is right at home in the middle of the second century.

(5) *Romantic novels and fascination with Scheintod*. Another very interesting feature that strongly encourages us to date Akhmîm Gospel narrative to the second century is the appearance of Greek and Roman novels, in which heroes and heroines appear to die (*Scheintod*), only to reappear alive, sometimes seemingly miraculously. The close parallels with some of the features of the New Testament Gospels (such as grave stones moved aside, tombs found empty, survival of a man tied to a cross, even apparent mimicry of the Words of Institution) suggest that the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection gave rise to the *Scheintod* theme of these Greek and novels, composed in the second half of the first century and on into the second century. The embellishments of the Akhmîm Gospel narrative are fully in step with the dramatic *Scheintod* features of these novels. Indeed, the Akhmîm Gospel narrative seems to have been influenced by them. This remarkable coherence of literary features supports a second century date for the Akhmîm Gospel narrative.

(6) *Other factors*. There are other factors that cohere with a second-century date of the text of the Akhmîm narrative. The fragment's use of the expression "Lord's Day" reflects not the early usage of this language (as in Rev 1:10 and *Did.* 14:1), but a later usage (as in Ignatius, *Magn.* 9:1–2) in which Sunday, the "Lord's Day," has taken the place of the Sabbath, the day that the Jews observe. The fragment's heavy dependence on the Gospel of Matthew, which likely was composed in Syria, increases the likelihood that the gospel fragment originated in Syria, which in turn supports the identification of the fragment with the *GPet*, known to Serapion, the bishop of Antioch. Likewise, the great probability that the Akhmîm gospel circulated under the name of Peter lends further support to this identification.

Taken together, these several points of coherence strongly encourage the conclusion that the Akhmîm gospel fragment belongs to a second-century writing, a writing probably produced in the east, if not specifically in Syria. This coherence that has been observed also encourages us to think that the text of this second-century writing remains largely unaltered in the Akhmîm Codex. This writing may well be the *GPet*, but even if it is not, it almost certainly is a second-century text.

The *Überlieferungsgeschichte* of the resurrection of Jesus reaches its full development in the Christian literature of the late second century. The principal portraits of resurrection apologetic can hardly be developed further. The resurrection event now has multiple eyewitnesses, including hostile and high-ranking witnesses. The resurrection event itself entails remarkable features, including heavenly endorsements, designed to impress, even silence critics. The resurrection account found in the Akhmîm fragment squarely fits into this context and, indeed, constitutes an important part of it.

The *Überlieferungsgeschichte* of the resurrection of Jesus serves other purposes as well. Not only does it answer critics and sceptics, it answers a number of questions asked by Christians themselves and others who are inquiring into the meaning of this new faith. What happened at the moment of the resurrection? Who and how many witnessed it? Does the resurrection event shed light on the tradition of Christ's descent into hell and his proclamation there? These and other questions are addressed by the Akhmîm gospel fragment and the even more elaborate *Acts of Pilate*.

I have undertaken critical study of the way resurrection traditions functioned in one specific, second-century document. This approach has provided us with insight into how at least one author and one group of Christians understood resurrection and how it could be defended in the

face of hostility, scepticism, and ridicule. The author of the Akhmîm fragment laboured to make the resurrection story more compelling—and in his mind—unassailable, in comparison to the canonical accounts which provide no eyewitness account of the resurrection but focus, instead, on the ambiguous testimony of frightened women, thus leaving themselves vulnerable to scepticism from Jews and pagans alike.

The Akhmîm gospel fragment, which may well be the *GPet* condemned by Bishop Serapion, can be dated to the middle of the second century, not by appeals to P.Oxy. 2949 or P.Oxy. 4009 (or other related materials), but by comparative analysis, an analysis that demonstrates that the fragment exemplifies an apologetic that addresses second-century Jewish and pagan criticisms of the resurrection narratives of the earlier gospels. The evidence that has been reviewed strongly supports this position. Furthermore, I have shown that the apologetic of the Akhmîm gospel fragment was also intended to assure second-century Christians that the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus rested upon actual eyewitness testimony *of the resurrection event itself*, not merely the discovery of the empty tomb and later reports of resurrection appearances.

This study brings much needed clarity to the theological, historical, and apologetic contexts that shaped early Christians' understanding and initial proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus and its subsequent clarification and defence. I have argued that important second-century factors have not been adequately assessed in previous scholarship. In this study I have assembled several important witnesses, mostly deriving from the eastern part of the Roman Empire and mostly from the mid- to late second century, that is, from the time and place in which the *GPet* circulated. These materials support the identification of the fifth-century (or later)[9] Akhmîm gospel fragment with the second-century *GPet*. These witnesses further justify the assumption that the Greek text of the Akhmîm gospel fragment closely approximates the original wording of the second-century text known to Serapion and his churches in Syria. The Akhmîm gospel fragment may possess no verisimilitude with respect to the culture and history of first-century Palestine, but it coheres closely with the middle of the second century, in a setting outside the land of Palestine, whether specifically in Syria or more generally in the eastern Roman Empire. Indeed, the Akhmîm gospel fragment fits well in the post-Bar Kokhba setting, when anti-Semitism in the Roman Empire peaked.

9. Perhaps sixth to ninth century depending on which paleographic authority one relies (see p. 35, above).

The findings in this study lay the foundation on which future comparative study may build, especially study that concerns undated texts and traditions, whose provenance is unknown. My comparative analysis identified several intersecting lines of evidence, all pointing to the middle of the second century. This comparative approach should prove efficacious in the analysis of other important texts, whose traditions and points of origins to date remain obscure.

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